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SPECIAL ISSUE

In Memory of

PROFESSOR A.B.M. HABIBULLAH

Editor

SUTAPA SINHA

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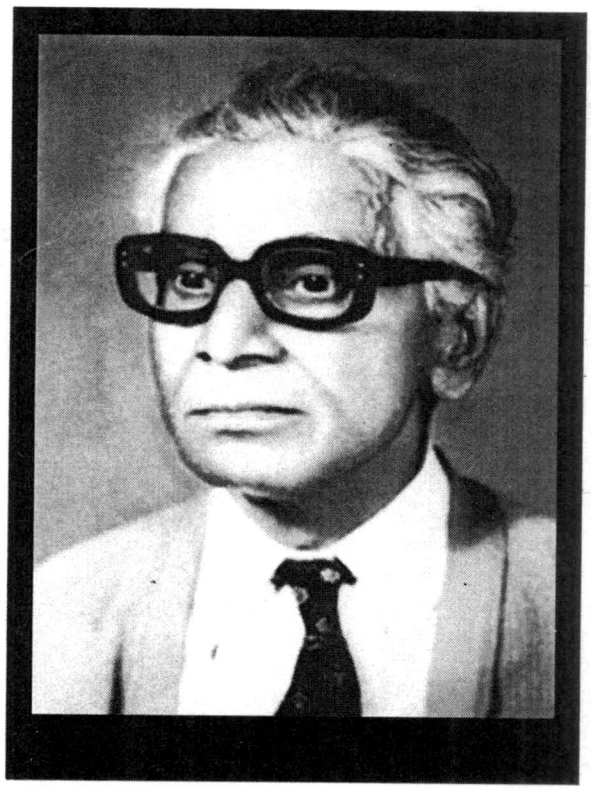

The first issue of the *Journal of Islamic History and Culture of India* is dedicated to the memory of Professor A. B. M. Habibullah

Contents

EDITOR'S NOTE vii

CONTRIBUTORS ix

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Evolving Contours of Medieval Indian History
Harbans Mukhia 1

REMINISCENCES

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah: My Father
Zulekha Haque 9

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah: A Brief Review of His Life and Works
Enamul Haque 12

State and Compatriots Vis-à-vis Professor A.B. M. Habibullah
Ratan Lal Chakraborty 16

A Tribute to the Memory of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah
Kazi Sufior Rahaman 27

ARCHITECTURE

"Empiricism...by Compromise and Improvisation"—A Lens for the Early Islamic Architecture of Bengal
Perween Hasan 34

Hydrology and Medieval Technology: A Case Study of the Deccan
Sanjay Subodh 52

EPIGRAPHY AND WRITTEN SOURCES

Epigraphs of Medieval Bengal: Mode of Decipherment and Utilization for History-writing
A. K. M. Yaqub Ali 75

Persian Chronicles of Akbar's Time: as Sources of Medieval History
G. S. Khwaja 92

URBANIZATION

Medieval Town of Nadia, c. 1200 to c.1800: Location and Morphology
Aniruddha Ray 101

CONTENTS

SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND POLITY

The Position of Zamidars under the Nizamat in Bengal
Munshi Mazibar Rahman 125

Some Aspects of Mohammedan Finance
Anjona Chattopadhyay 141

Liberal Trends and the Bengali Muslim Writers in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries
Ashoke Kumar Chakraborty 158

RELIGION

Sufism and Society in Medieval India
Amit Dey 166

Jaunpur as a Seat of Bhakti Tradition and Hindi Love Lores
Syed Ejaz Hussain 184

Editor's Note

The Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Calcutta is bringing out its first journal of the Department since its inception in 1940. In 2012, the Department organised a two-day international conference entitled 'A.B.M. Habibullah Centenary Seminar: Reading Indian Medieval History' on 6-7 March to celebrate the birth centenary of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, one of the founder-members of this Department. The Department planned to bring out a proceeding volume of the Conference as a common ritual when Honourable Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Suranjan Das, kindly suggested 'to publish a Special Issue of the Journal incorporating papers to be presented in the Conference'.

Therefore, this first issue of the Journal entitled *Journal of the Islamic History and Culture of India* is a special issue dedicated to memory of its one of the founder-members, Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, comprised twelve articles presented in the above-mentioned conference along with three invited ones. The *Journal* is divided into six sections as per the theme of the conference like 'Reminiscences', 'Architecture', 'Epigraphy and Written Sources', 'Religion', 'Urbanization' and all three invited articles are grouped under 'Society, Economy and Polity'. The Keynote address of the Conference was delivered by the eminent historian of medieval Indian history and former Professor of JNU, Professor Harbans Mukhia, and his contribution entitled 'Evolving Contours of Medieval Indian History' is the most befitting article to open this Special Issue in memory of a historian like Professor Habibullah, the famous author of *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*. All other articles of this volume are also contributed by the scholars and historians of India and Bangladesh; most of them are of international repute in their respective field of Indian history and culture. We are very happy to have contribution in 'Reminiscences' section from Dr Zulekha Haque, the elder daughter of Professor Habibullah and Dr Enamul Haque, the eldest son-in-law of Professor Habibullah—two eminent art historians from Bangladesh. Contribution of Professor Ratan Lal Chakraborty and Professor Perween Hasan, formerly of Dhaka University and Professor A. K. M. Yaqub Ali of Rajshahi University, Bangladesh in the respective section have enriched this volume of the journal to a great extent. We are also proud to have an article written by Professor Aniruddha Ray, one of the senior most former professors of the Department and a famous historian of medieval Indian history. Professor Ray was an invited speaker of the Conference but could not join us due to his physical indisposition. However, he readily agreed to contribute his valuable article to this special issue in memory of Professor Habibullah on our request. I shall also mention the names of Professor Amit Dey of the Department of History, Calcutta University; Dr Syed Ejaz Hussain, Department of History, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan; Dr Sanjay Subodh from Hyderabad University and Dr G. S. Khwaja, Director of Epigraphy, ASI, Nagpur who have made the conference a very successful interactive platform for the scholars and students and also made this venture of publication possible by contributing their thought-provoking articles. An important and interesting article in the first section by Dr Kazi Sufior Rahaman, Associate Professor of this Department is homage to our founder-member Professor Habibullah. Last but not least are the three scholarly articles in the fifth section of the volume contributed by our esteemed colleagues and friends Munshi Mazibar Rahman, Drs Anjona Chattopadhyay and Ashoke Kumar Chakraborty which certainly made this volume a

comprehensive one to understand the ethos of Islamic history and culture of India.

As the editor of this special issue of the first journal of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, I am extremely grateful to our Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor(A), Pro Vice-Chancellor(BA & F), and Registrar for providing necessary permissions and valuable suggestions to start this new venture and make this publication successful. My sincere thanks are due to the Superintendent of the Press of the University of Calcutta, 48 Hazra Road, Kolkata 700 019 and his staff members for their support and cooperation. I am specially obliged to my colleagues and students of the Department for their support and help to make the Conference successful and this Publication possible.

The department is extremely thankful to Indian Council of Historical Research for partially funding this International Conference held on 6-7 March 2012.

I am very much thankful to my colleague Swati Biswas for her constant cooperation and I am immensely indebted to Dr Sudipa Ray Bandyopadhyay, Associate Professor, Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta for her unstinted help and support.

My special thanks goes to Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharya without whose support, guidance and inspiration, this publication would not have come out.

Kolkata, December 11 2013.

Sutapa Sinha

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Evolving Contours of Medieval Indian History

HARBANS MUKHIA

I am deeply beholden to the Department of Islamic History and Culture, the University of Calcutta, for inviting me to present the Keynote Address to this seminar dedicated to the memory of one of the stalwarts of medieval Indian history writing in the subcontinent. Before I explore the theme of this paper, I cannot resist recalling some of the most memorable associations I was fortunate to have formed with Professor Habibullah.

Sometime around September or October 1971, I was located as a Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and submitted a paper in a seminar held at the Institute on the theme of communalism. As I was writing the paper, news was flashed in the newspapers that the Pakistan army had shot dead from point-blank range some of the leading intellectuals of the then East Pakistan to teach a lesson to the rebels. Among the names mentioned was that of Professor Habibullah. I had never met him until then, but the news stunned us all, especially those of us who knew of his stature, the enormous depth of his scholarship and his unwavering commitment to secular values. I was personally so moved that, even as I was aware that while one dedicates one's books to whoever one feels like, research papers are never dedicated, I still dedicated it to the 'memory' of Professor Habibullah. To our great relief the news turned out to be a false alarm. A few years later the Centre for Historical Studies at JNU invited him as Visiting Professor for a year and I told him of the story of the paper and gave him a copy. We both had a hearty laugh at it. Professor Habibullah and Mrs Habibullah remained in residence on JNU campus for a year and we were able to forge some very durable contacts with them, and indeed with their elder daughter, Zulekha and son-in-law, Dr Enamul Haque. These are some of the most cherished memories of my life.

Now that I am several years into my retirement from University's service, I find it both very interesting and very instructive to look back upon the forty-four years of teaching Medieval Indian History, eleven at three Colleges of Delhi University and thirty-three at JNU, especially in its formative years. I feel very lucky to have witnessed some major thresholds being crossed in history writing, in medieval Indian writing in particular. As a graduate and post-graduate student at Delhi University in the second half of the 1950s,

we were subjected to reading the history of megalomaniac kings and queens and their deeds and misdeeds. Looking back, one recognizes the legitimacy of the popular complaints against the discipline of history about having to mug up numerous names and dates of accessions of rulers, followed by the dates of their battles and rebellions against them and finally their death or deposition, leading on to yet another year of accession and yet more battles and so forth. As Professor Nurul Hasan used to say half in jest that in history writing of that kind only names and dates changed; history itself remained the same.

Much later in the late 1960s, when I happened to be writing my doctoral dissertation, 'Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar', the stark truth of this half-in-jest statement struck me. I realized that most historians of medieval India in the twentieth century had really followed the pattern of politico-dynastic history handed down to us by our primary sources. Thus, after Professor Habibullah's masterpiece, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India,* there wasn't another significant book on the theme from even a slightly different perspective. It is only in the 1990s and 2000s that very important research works – like those of Peter Jackson, Sunil Kumar, Finbarr B Flood – have made their appearance, but none that is mentionable was published for decades after *The Foundation*. The next book on medieval Indian history was that of K. S. Lal, *The History of the Khaljis (1290-1320)*, once again standing alone, followed by Agha Mahdi Hussain's *History of the Tughlaqs*, which was in turn followed by A. B. Pandey's *First Afghan Empire*. It seems to have been assumed that when the history of one dynasty had been written about, another historian can have the only option of going for the following dynasty. Just as it was in medieval India itself.

The real break, the watershed, came in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the publication of D. D. Kosambi's *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, 1956, Irfan Habib's *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, 1963, and R. S. Sharma's *Indian Feudalism*, 1965. A threshold was crossed. Although D. D. Kosambi's book was entirely given to ancient Indian history, it forcefully brought the Marxist perspectives to bear on the study of all of Indian history; influence clearly transcended the temporal boundaries. Irfan Habib's work on the other hand was classically 'medieval' period-wise, though it changed the landscape of medieval Indian history writing. R. S. Sharma brought home the mega thematic analytics into Indian history writing, even as its time period was confined to 'ancient India'. All of these rendered the old historiographical themes of dynastic history and wars and battles, accessions and depositions, administration and administrative and other 'policies' of rulers irrelevant to the student of history. With this, the earlier tripartite division of Indian history into 'ancient', 'medieval' and 'modern' came to be qualified and redefined. While the earlier conventional division was based

upon change of dynasties, or change in the religious identity of the rulers, now the historian began to look for long term mutations in the economy, technology and society. Today, a great deal of the understanding evolved under the influence of these masters is under considerable strain; but further advances have been made precisely on grounds prepared by them. This is how as it should be.

Today, beginning with the 1990s, or perhaps a little earlier, a yet another threshold is being crossed with focus moving from the 'Marxist' socio-economic history to broader, and somewhat more elusive themes of culture, society, ecology, and histories of concepts such as those of time, apace, habitat and households, religious cultures, social history of legends, women, gender and inter-personal relations, ecology, architecture, literature and paintings as historical texts and not least history as perceptions.

How has this come about?

Let us begin with the recognition of the predominant presence of Positivism, and its variant, Marxism over virtually the entire humanity over the past two and a half centuries. Originating in nature, or indeed more precisely in the natural sciences, it sought to replicate their methodology in the social sciences during the eighteenth, nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. While it sought to study the contemporary society, its economy and its politics, it also replicated the 'scientific' methodology in its study of the past, in the study of history. Its objective was to be able to *precisely* trace societal behaviour and thereby predict its future course, just as natural scientists do in their area of scrutiny. Auguste Comte, French philosopher and founder of the discipline of Sociology in the nineteenth century, was to state the objective in clearest terms. In the hierarchy of precision, he placed Sociology at the top and Mathematics at the bottom and argued: 'This positive approach will provide the key to human destiny, the key to one solid form of society. The vision is of a world in which scientific rationality forms the basis for the regulation of social order. For this, the discipline base lies in sociology, a science of society based on models and methods of natural sciences. Sociology will discover the scientific laws that explain relations between parts of society'.[1]

Positivism in the natural sciences operates with the dichotomy between the objective reality, which is given and impervious to human intervention, and subjective perception which is constantly evolving, although the absoluteness of the dichotomy has not remained unquestioned.[2] Subjective

[1] John Hassard, *Sociology and Organization Theory: Positivism, Paradigms and Post-modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 5-6 and 16.

[2] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1962. However, Kuhn had later on moderated some of his stridency. See, J. Hassard, *Sociology and Organization Theory*, pp. 79-81.

perception can approximate to the objective reality through incremental knowledge, which can be utilised for amelioration of human condition but cannot alter the reality. Let me illustrate it with some everyday sort of examples.

Time was when it was thought that the earth was flat and that the sun went round the earth. Gradually, through the growth of knowledge, it was realized that the earth was actually round, or nearly round and that it was the earth which rotated on its own axis and round the sun rather than the other way. In parenthesis, it might be noted that Galileo, who had, following Copernicus, declared that it was the earth which moved around the sun had hurt the religious sentiments of the Pope and millions of Catholics for whom it was the divine truth that the sun moved around the earth and the hurt was so intense that Galileo had to recant his observation and apologise to the Church; the apology notwithstanding, he was excommunicated. To his credit, in his dying moments he once again affirmed his conviction in the immortal words, 'It still moves'. It was only in the 1990s that the Church realized that its 'truth' was erroneous and exonerated the scientist after some 400 years of torment! An illuminating lesson in what havoc 'hurt religious sentiment' can wreak!

Positivism also created another dichotomy: scientific and rational knowledge was characterised by universal validity and universal demonstrability of its veracity or falsity, which was the inverse of intuitive knowledge gained through, for example, religion.

And a fundamental Positivist dichotomy is between *the* Truth, which is objective and immutable and the rest that is all false. Positivism seeks out that objective Truth through rational methods. The unstated emphasis on the *singularity* of Truth calls for attention.

In History, the classic formulation of Leopold von Ranke in the nineteenth century, 'History tells us as it really happened', captures the Positivist construction pithily, succinctly and accurately. The seven-word statement carries three major, though implicit emphases: First, it is not the historian or historians, who tell us what had happened in the past and how; it is the discipline of History which tells us. How? A time will come when *all* the facts of history will have been collected. Until that happens, a historian or a group of historians, or indeed all historians put together, might still be giving us a partial and flawed picture of the past, for their own knowledge would be far from complete. Once, however, all facts had been put together, History in its totality would be before us and what it would tell us would be the complete picture which would be immutable or subject to any doubt. The second emphasis is on 'telling'. When we wish to emphasise the finality of a

truth, we often do so by 'telling' that truth. When we assert, 'I am telling you...', it is for us the most definitive form of assertion. And finally, History in its completeness will tell us as it *really* happened, i.e. there would be no space for the slightest ambiguity about what History will tell us.

This is Positivist, scientific history par excellence. Interestingly, embedded in this assertion is a self-destruct project that seems to have eluded von Ranke or Positivists in general: What happens to the pursuit of History once all the facts have been collected sometime in the future and History has told us unambiguously the complete story of the past, as it had *really* happened? Clearly, there would be nothing more left to be told and the pursuit of History must come to its end. In fact, the pursuit of knowledge forever renews itself through self-questioning; there is no terminal point for it, quite besides the fact that History can never tell us as it really happened, for, among several other reasons, a substantive part of the past has been lost to us irretrievably and is constantly getting lost every day.

Marxism inverted some essential elements of Positivism on its head and yet imbibed its other essential elements. If Positivism swore by the 'objectivity', i.e. value-neutrality of historical facts at least until all facts had been collected and History had once and for all spoken in an unambiguous language, Marxism prioritised the theoretical perspective of class struggle as inescapable fact for making sense of those facts at every stage. Yet, Marxism too stood by the dichotomy of an objective truth unearthed gradually by subjective perception. It was as insistent on the singularity of Truth as Positivism was.

Positivism faced the most serious challenge in the last quarter of the twentieth century which still continues. The one fundamental dichotomy in Positivism was the Truth vs. Falsehood, similar to the one in nature and the natural sciences. In the social sciences, this dichotomy has been seriously questioned and has indeed been displaced by the notion of 'truths' in lieu of the singular Truth. 'Truths' is not a replacement of an absolute truth with relative truths where each one is entitled to one's own truth and each truth has the same level of validity as all the others. 'Truth', used constantly within quotes, is not one that is the opposite of falsehood(s); each truth is in fact a mobilisation of social power. Thus every philosophy, every theory, idea, notion or even pronouncement, is not true or false in itself, but is a form of mobilisation of social power. For instance, until the 1960s we were used to

looking at what we today call the 'medieval' period of Indian history as its 'Muslim' period. Whether the period really was Muslim or Islamic is neither true nor false by itself; it is one form of mobilisation of historical knowledge for social intervention. Its metamorphosis into the 'medieval' period is equally neither true nor false by itself; it is yet another form of social intervention. Or, to take another example: until the end of the 1950s the predominant explanation of the fall of Mughal Empire was the one tendered to the scholarly world by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, placing a very high, though not exclusive, responsibility on Aurangzeb's religious policy which was guided by his Islamic zeal, and what he had termed as the 'Hindu Reaction' to it. Then came Professor Irfan Habib's outstanding work in 1963 which did away with the set terms of debate and substituted for it the veritable class struggle of the increasingly impoverished peasants, led by the equally exploited zamindars, waged against the Mughal State represented by the antagonistic class of jagirdars. Neither Sarkar's explanation nor Habib's is true or false by itself, for there is plenty of subsequent historical research to raise non-dismissible questions about them; but each is a way of looking at history, and therefore at society and each contains a view of how our society should evolve.

History and society thus comprise of a multiplicity of competing 'truths' where the victory of one does not establish its absolute veracity but the amount of social power that could be, or was, mobilized on its behalf. This 'truth' in turn will face challenges from other 'truths', other forms of mobilisations. This is essentially Michel Foucault's formulation. It basically questions the certitude inherent in Positivism and Marxism and brings to the surface the innate ambiguity in the study of human behaviour in the past or now.

These developments have occurred around the world, including India. It is clear now that history that does *not* tell us as it really happened; it is indeed incapable of telling us as it really happened, for a large part of what happened has in any case been irretrievably lost to us. What it does tell us how societies change or how people's, or more precisely, historians' understanding of what had really happened in the past keeps changing. There is thus no ultimate, objective truth that we shall one day discover. Truth is indeed more ambiguous than what Positivism and Marxism had allowed for.

Even the tripartite division of historical time that Europe had invented in the sixteenth century and had spread around the world is under serious questioning. The notions of Time and Space, two essential pillars of the historian's craft, have been globally incorporated with Europe's expansion in the eighteenth, nineteenth and the twentieth centuries under a new dispensation of power relations. This too is under questioning. Jack Goody indeed calls it 'the theft of history' in which Europe had 'stolen' numerous regional notions of time and space and superimposed the single uniform notion that we now operate with.[3] Especially under attack is the singular notion of modernity that has been long universally accepted as an objective reality.[4]

It is interesting that among the giant historians of medieval India of the generation that is now past, Professor Habibullah was well aware of history's ambiguous voice. His *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India* had a significant subtitle, *A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi, 1206-1290.* He was the first to note the ambiguity of the *Muslim* character of the Delhi Sultanate, something that good historians like Finbarr B. Flood are astonished to discover now, in part because Flood had not seen Professor Habibullah's book.[5]

If Marxism had been the predominant paradigm in medieval India's history writing from the 1960s to the early 80s, yet another threshold was quietly being crossed with newer problematic being constituted largely in the sphere of culture including religion. Even bazaar gossip has come in for serious historical analysis. We have entered a very exciting era of explorations including the hitherto somewhat restricted entry zone of sexuality, erotic literature and erotic paintings. There are so much of social meanings embedded in all of these.

There seems to be a two-fold movement evident here: from certitudes to ambiguities, which in any case is closer to human behaviour, and from the study of impersonal structures like empire, state and class to what the French have called the history of everyday life. History's dynamics seems to have moved from mega phenomena like the rise and fall of empires or dramatic

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[3] Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006.

[4] For a brief overview see Harbans Mukhia, 'Subjective Modernities', *Occasional Paper*, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 2013.

[5] Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation. Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2009. Habibullah's work is not mentioned even in its bibliography.

events like overarching revolutions to the harmonies and tensions that inhere in society's everyday life, manifest in institutions, families and individuals. Whereas historical change was earlier perceived as resulting from single head-on collision between two opposing forces as in the massive battles for empires or the French or the Russian Revolution, it has increasingly come to be located in what V. S. Naipaul has called 'a million mutinies'. History does not change only with these giant collisions; it also changes a little bit every day.

I am sure that if Professor Habibullah was with us, he would have greatly appreciated the profound mutation that his discipline has undergone since his departure, largely because the foundation for this had been laid by his scholarship and his open mindedness.

REMINISCENCES

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah: My Father

ZULEKHA HAQUE

I have to thank the organizers of this conference, to give me this opportunity to talk and thank everyone for remembering my father Professor Abu Barakat Mohamed Habibullah, the best part of whose life has been spent here in Calcutta or Kolkata, especially in this august University which has been his Alma Mater, as well as his place of work for a long time.

Born in a family of academicians it was natural to think this was the rightful place for him. But in the social structure of the early 20th century it was not an easy task for a Muslim boy, however brilliant he may be, to enter such a prestigious service. Specially having been born not in the city of Kolkata, but in the remote village of Bamunia in Burdwan district on the bank of river Damodar, it was quite tough. My grandfather, Abdul Latif, one of the first groups of English educated Muslims, became a Divisional Inspector of Schools and was posted in different places. My father having lost his mother at an early age, always accompanied his father, with his elder brother, wherever he went. But that consolation was also taken away from him when his father and elder brother died within three months of each other, just before his I.A or today's H.S. examination. Left in the care of his step mother, my father though carried on his studies with credit, his moodiness became a part of his life all through. Married to my mother, Lutfunnessa Minu, daughter of Dr Dabiruddin Ahmad, a renowned doctor in Bhawanipur, Calcutta, my father went to London, for his higher studies in 1934 with a scholarship and returned with a Ph.D.. degree from the University of London.

But it must be mentioned here, that in his early life, he was put in the Madrasa of Hooghly, which became a boon instead, because it made him a totally liberal and non-communal man which he remained throughout his life. Later on when we went to Oxford for our post-graduate studies, my husband chose to study Iconography of Hindu sculptures of Bengal and I chose Temple Terracotta of Bengal. This made my father very happy and he welcomed it.

My paternal grandfather, like his father, was a scholar in Persian and Urdu. My father, Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was also fluent in Persian, Arabic and Urdu. In his childhood, he was discouraged from learning Bengali formally, but later he revolted and learned to read and write Bengali to

such an extent that whosoever has read his Bengali writings has been amazed at his expertise over the language. After my birth, he did not like my name Zulekha, given by my maternal grandfather, and so when I was put to school in the K.G. section, he gave me the name of Anamika Habib, by which name I was known until class four. His translation of Alberuni's work into Bengali from original Arabic, is another example of his love for Bengali language.

Eldest among four children, I have always seen him immersed in his books, with few friends in Calcutta, amongst whom I remember Syed Mujtaba Ali, Gauri Ayub and Abu Syed Ayub, Mohibbul Hasan of Aligarh and others. He talked about Dr Niharranjan Ray, his knowledge and great scholarship a lot. He was always enthusiastic about women's education and was married to a girl of class VIII. He encouraged my mother to graduate later on from Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta as well as all his daughters to study up to post-graduate level and beyond. I remember him making me sit on the floor and read aloud the headlines of *The Statesman* when I was in class III. My other sisters and brother were born quite late and his affection towards everyone was expressive. I do not clearly remember him writing his early books, but I remember someone coming to the house and congratulating him on a book, the name of which escaped me then, but it must have been *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, which has become a milestone on the subject in the subcontinent.

I remember my father becoming very agitated and upset when the communal riots broke out in Bengal. He used to stay out quite late and go to various meetings to protest at the political situations and decisions of those days. I distinctly remember his writing in *The Statesman* against the division of Bengal and foretelling the future destruction of Pakistan which became true later. From 1948 onwards he was repeatedly offered job in the University of Dhaka which he kept refusing. But later on after the riot of 1950, under the pressure of my mother and her family he agreed to leave Calcutta towards the middle of the year. He set up the Department of Islamic History and Culture in the University of Dhaka, but his heart never settled in Dhaka and used to escape to Calcutta whenever he could. When he went to London for the second time in 1954-55, he took my mother with him and encouraged her to do Montessory Diploma course and later helped her to set up the first Montesorry school in Dhaka for children.

My father was steadfast in his belief and principles. He was chosen to be the Dean of Dhaka University in 1961 but resigned two years later, when Dr Osman Gani was made the Vice Chancellor, as he did not agree with his totalitarian views. Similarly, he was made the Chairman of UGC by Bangabandhu Shaikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 but later on when Syed Ali Ahsan was made Education minister by the next Government, he resigned

in protest in 1977 and took up visiting Professorship in Canberra, Australia and next year in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and later also in the University of Cambridge, U.K. His work in organizing the teachers of the University as President of the University Teachers Association during the Liberation War and other organizing works are exemplary and will be discussed in the next paper by Enamul Haque.

My father's behaviour changed a lot after the birth of our children, as he began to be more easy-going and used to laugh with them, especially with my daughter Trina who has become today a leading Economist in the World Bank and my son Samudra who is doing his Ph.D. in Space Science in George Washington University. My sisters, brother and son-in-law obtained post-graduate degrees from different universities of the world which was a matter of great joy to him, as there was nothing greater to him than education and be connected to it.

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, my father, is remembered by his family and friends with affection and respect and I am grateful to the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Calcutta for remembering him specially by holding an International Conference in his memory.

I again thank you all for remembering him and showing honour to him in this way.

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah: A Brief Review of His Life and Works[1]

ENAMUL HAQUE

A.B.M. Habibullah was born in Burdwan district in West Bengal. His father Abdul Latif was a graduate of the University of Calcutta (1893) and served as a Divisional Inspector of Schools. His grandfather was a teacher of Arabic and Persian languages. Habibullah had his early education at Hooghly and Dhaka. He passed the High Madrasa Examinations from the Hooghly Madrasa and I. A. from the Islamic Intermediate College, Dhaka, in 1926 and 1928 respectively. He obtained BA (Hons.) in Histrory from the Hooghly Mohsin College and MA in History from the Calcutta University in 1931 and 1933 respectively. He then went to the UK with the Lytton Scholarship in 1934 and obtained his PhD degree in 1936 from the University of London. He also obtained a Diploma in Library Science from London and became a Fellow of the Library Association (FLA) of London in 1937. Very few people had the distinction of getting an FLA at that time, with Niharranjan Ray, a contemporary of Habibullah, being one of them. On his return to India, Habibullah served as the Librarian of the Calcutta Madrasa (1938-1940). He joined the University of Calcutta in 1940 as a Lecturer of History and subsequently joined the newly created Department of Islamic History and Culture in the same University.

This is not a researched article. It is based partly on personal knowledge and the rest on secondary sources, and inaccuracies, therefore, may have crept into this essay, and may be excused. Habibullah died in 1984 after continuing to teach and write for more than four decades. He served the University of Calcutta for ten years. When the communal riots took a turn for the worse, in 1950, he very reluctantly left Calcutta and at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor of the Dhaka University, joined the newly opened Department of Islamic History and Culture as a Reader. He became Professor and Head of the Department in 1952 and retired in 1973 from the same position. Meanwhile, he had been elected Dean of the Faculty of Arts,

[1] I may submit that I had the opportunity of being close to Professor Habibullah since I became his eldest son-in-law in 1962. During the last 22 years of his life, I had the pleasure of sharing most of his extramural activities as our subjects of research belonged to the same genre.

1961-63, and President of the University Teachers Association successively for four years (1968-73). During the War of Liberation in 1971, because of his leading role among the academicians, Habibullah was dismissed from his job by General Tikka Khan, the military Governor of East Pakistan. He then left for England where the Cambridge University offered him a Fellowship. He was made the Chairman of the University Grants Commission in 1975-77 but he resigned from the job because of the high-handedness of the Government. He enjoyed a Fellowship at Australian National University in 1977-78 and at J.N.U. in New Delhi in 1978-79. He served as Honorary Curator of Dhaka Museum for several terms during 1954-55, 1958-59 and 1962-64. He was made the first Professor Emeritus of the Dhaka University in1974. During the last two years of his life, he was the President of the Bangla Academy.

Professor Habibullah should be judged not by the records of his jobs and positions, but by his capability and contributions in the field of scholarship. He first drew attention of the scholarly world with publication of his doctoral dissertation from University of London entitled *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India.* This immediately placed him in the ranks of an eminent historian. In the Indian context, Habibullah can be said to have worked as the pioneer of a doctrine where history is not complete without looking into the expansion of empire, administrative system, army, revenue system, economy, law and justice, society, culture, art and architecture. He found that the study of pre-Mughal India appeared to be a luckless field and was comparatively neglected by scholars. Therefore, he selected to deal with the formation of a multi-religious state in the thirteenth century India which was formed by compromise and improvisation. With a comprehensive approach he diagnosed the transformation of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi into an Indo-Muslim Mamluk Kingdom. In doing so, Habibullah pointed to the "diffusion of those elements which were to dominate Indian life for several centuries".

Almost immediately on his return from London, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the editor of the 2nd volume of the *History of Bengal* published by the Dhaka University, engaged him to write the two chapters on the Later Ilyas Shahi dynasty and the Habshi interregnum, and the Husain Shahi dynasty of Bengal. Many considered him as too young to be selected for such assignments. But those two chapters have mostly remained unsurpassed during the last seven decades.

Professor Habibullah, after 1950, though settled in the then East Pakistan, he never found satisfaction in academic activities in a theocratic Pakistan. His outstanding secular views put him at a distance

from the so called historians who were blindly distorting history in the name of religion. This situation was perhaps at the root of his effort to build organizations, to build history free from prejudices, one after the other.

It was he, who took the initiative and was instrumental in establishing the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (later Bangladesh) in 1955. For nearly two decades he was the guiding light of the Society which he served as a Councillor, General Secretary and President. Dhaka had never had such a research organization before.

Professor Habibullah was passionately in love with the Bengali language. The students of Dhaka University created the historic 21 February in 1952 demanding equal place of Bengali as a state language of Pakistan. Not remaining satisfied with the political agitation, he took concrete measures to promote the Bengali language as a vehicle of higher thoughts. Professor Habibullah established the Itihas Parishad in 1966 to encourage the writing of history in Bengali. It started regularly holding annual conferences at different places of East Pakistan (later Bangladesh). In 1966, appeared his first of the two volumes of *Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian, Urdu and Arabic Manuscripts in the Dhaka University Library*, the second volume coming out in 1968. In 1966, he also edited the *Nalini Kanta Bhattasali Commemoration Volume* which was the first anthology from East Pakistan containing articles from Pakistan, India and the West. Earlier in 1957, he contributed the chapter on Mamluk Sultans in the Volume V of the *History and Culture of Indian People* edited by R.C. Majumdar.

Among the major publications of Professor Habibullah, perhaps the most distinguished and laborious work was to translate the *Kitab-ul Hind* of Alberuni in Bengali from the original Arabic. Critics agreed that it was a more realistic translation than any was attempted before and merited re-translation in English. This showed his absolute loyalty to the Bengali language. Had he translated it in English, surely he would have attracted a wider world audience. He had a wish to write the medieval history of Bengal in Bengali, like the volume of Niharranjan Ray's *Bangalir Itihas: Adiparba*. But ill health did not permit him to do so. Professor Habibullah also translated, again in Bengali, *Sigurf-nama-i-Vilayet* (*Vilayetnama*) of Mirza Sheikh Itishamuddin. This was a volume of pictures que England published in 1765, by the first native visitor from India.

Professor Habibullah published numerous articles in Bengali on history and literature, mostly in *Chaturanga* from Calcutta which were subsequently published in 1974 as an anthology, titled *Samaj, Sanskriti O Itihas*. His numerous presidential addresses have remained a source of many original ideas.

Professor Habibullah was respected in Bangladesh, as he was in undivided India, as the leading figure for the advocacy of freedom of intellect. His erudition and comprehensive knowledge on the broad spectrum of South Asian history made him, above all, a great teacher. A staunch believer in Bengali nationalism, he led the autonomy movement of the universities of Bangladesh in the 1960s which culminated in the Dacca University Order of 1973, further leading to the establishment of the University Grants Commission in 1974.

Recently, Calcutta University, in celebrating the birth centenary of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, has once again demonstrated its commitment to a long standing liberal tradition of honouring scholars across the creeds and countries. Dhaka University also celebrated his birth centenary. As a member of the family, I express my sincere thanks to both the Universities; I believe that the faculties and students of both the Universities will act as today's torch-bearer of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah.

State and Compatriots vis-à-vis Professor A.B.M. Habibullah

RATAN LAL CHAKRABORTY

To begin with, I feel much honoured for being invited as a speaker on the occasion of the celebration of the birth centenary of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, the charismatic figure among the intellectuals of the University of Dhaka. First of all, I would like to pay my personal homage to Professor A.B.M. Habibullah who had directly helped me for conducting historical research. While I was doing M.Phil. degree without any financial help from the Dhaka University, it was Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, who gave me a scholarship for two years in his personal capacity as the Chairman of the Bangladesh University Grants Commission. I was then working on the Myanmar-Bengal Relations, 1785-1820. I had no opportunity to learn the Myanmar language because of the fact that Myanmar was then a closed country and I could not attain the desired objectives within the specified time. However, before the lapse of time, I approached Professor A.B.M. Habibullah for extending my scholarship for six more months. I was astonished to find that Professor A.B.M. Habibullah had extended my scholarship for one year more with an advice to do comprehensive research without hurrying for the M.Phil. Degree. This is the beginning of his long and kind association with me. However, I had been able to complete the M.Phil. Dissertation nearly within three years and this thesis had also been published by the Dhaka University without any revision or change.

The Bangla Academy of Bangladesh (established in 1955) requested me to write a biography of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah. It was practically difficult to write the biography only with his personal file preserved in the Dhaka University record room. But fortunately, I had received enough help from the relations of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah in this regard. I should mention the names of those persons whose kind co-operation have contributed much to highlight the life and achievements of Professor Habibullah in brief. For this, I am grateful to Dr Imtiaz Hasan Habib (only son), Dr Enamul Haque (son-in law) and Dr Zulekha Haque (elder daughter). It was Dr Imtiaz Hasan Habib, who had handed over to me two big tin boxes of personal materials of Professor Habibullah before he left Bangladesh for America. Later in course of writing the biography of Professor Habibullah, I got all the necessary help and support from Dr Enamul Haque and Dr Zulekha

Haque, who behaved with me like a favourite student of their own. The Bangla Academy of Bangladesh has its own format for writing the biography of any renowned person. As a result, I could not do justice in writing the biography of Professor Habibullah. Moreover, the Bangla Academy had verbally requested to omit several pages, because the information contained therein might cause dissatisfaction among the living intellectuals.

The commotion created by the communal frenzy in 1940 and onwards and after the creation of Pakistan on the basis of religion had resulted in the migration of quite a large number of non-Muslim teachers of Dhaka University. It was found that sixty-six well-experienced non-Muslim teachers left Dhaka University in between 1945 to 1955. The unavoidable consequence of this desertion was very serious dislocation of teaching work in the University of Dhaka. In such situation several historians had also left India for East Bengal which was a part of the newly created state of Pakistan. The names of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah of Islamic History and Culture of the University of Calcutta, Professor Abdul Halim, Department of History and Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University and Dr Dani are worthy to mention among the teachers who joined the University of Dhaka in this period. Dr A.B.M. Habibullah joined the Department of Islamic History and Culture of the University of Dhaka in 1950 as Reader and Head of the Department and had continued his position as the Professor and Head of the Department up to 1976.

Pakistan was created on the basis of Two-Nations Theory. The non-Muslims, the Muslims, and the leaders of East Bengal, being a Muslim majority area, opted for joining Pakistan. Born in 1919 in the district of Burdwan, West Bengal (after 1947 a province of India) A.B.M. Habibullah had opted to migrate to East Bengal not for the slightest religious bias, but for academic excellence. Since the establishment, the University of Dhaka, enjoyed special autonomy which was an exception if compared with any University in India.[1] As Chancellor, Alexander George Robert Bulwar Lytton remarked during the convocation held in 1925 that 'This University is a state in miniature and by applying the principles which govern the administration and well-being of this University to the affairs of the nation, the future leader in Bengal can ensure the promotion of a happier feeling among the various peoples.'[2] The state intervention in the affairs of the Dhaka

[1] P. Seshadri, *The Universities of India*, Oxford University Press, 1935, p. 35.

[2] Sirajul Islam Chowdhury (ed.), 'The Chancellor's Speech, Alexander George Robert Bulwar Lytton', *The Convocation Speeches*, Vol. 1, 1923-46, Dhaka University, Dhaka, 1988, pp. 86-7.

University started in 1947 immediately after the creation of Pakistan by introducing a series of Ordinances. The Ordinance promulgated by the Government of East Bengal on 19 September, 1947, had been aimed at the reconstitution of the Executive Council and Academic Council. Subsequently the ordinance (Ordinance XIX of 1948) passed in 1948 had restricted the composition of the Dhaka University Court which acted earlier as the supreme legislative body consisting of several classes of members. Furthermore, another ordinance entitled as 'The Dacca University (Suspension of Operation of Statute) Ordinance' passed in 1949 had, in effect, restricted the appointment in the post of Professor of the subjects like Physics, Botany, Mathematics, Economics and Political Science and also in the post of Reader of Zoology. After the Language Movement of 1952, the administration of the Dhaka University was conducted by the direct intervention of the Government. These ordinances had, in fact, started the process of abolition of the long-practised autonomy of the University of Dhaka.

However, the final blow for sending the autonomy of the University in exile came from the ordinance passed by Ayub Khan in 1961. The Government replaced the Dhaka University Act of 1920 by a new ordinance entitled as the Dhaka University Ordinance, 1961. By introducing the Ordinance of 1961, the Martial Law Government, under the leadership of Ayub Khan, had changed the organizational set-up of the University and rejected the autonomy and related democratic tradition which the Dhaka University enjoyed since its establishment. In consequence the academic freedom of the University was lost. Moreover, the imposition of stringent service conditions upon the teachers created a very suffocating atmosphere which had adverse effect on the intellectual activities. A considerable number of dauntless teachers termed this ordinance as a 'black law' and Professor A.B.M. Habibullah played the role as pioneer. He urged the Government to restore the autonomy through his speeches and writings. Professor A.B.M. Habibullah received spontaneous support from the majority of the teacher and also active help from his esteemed colleagues namely Dr Enamul Huq (Bengali), Dr Ahmed Sharif (Bengali), Dr Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury (Political Science), Professor Abdur Razzaq (Political Science), Dr Abdul Matin Chowdhury (Physics), Dr Mamtazur Rahaman Tarafdar (Islamic History and Culture), Dr Ajoy Roy (Physics) and Dr K.S. Murshed (English) who were ardent supporters of Bengali nationalism.

Teacher's Right

Dr Abu Mahmud of the Economics Department appealed to the High Court in 1965 against the Dhaka University authority for doing injustice in his academic career which was not permissible under the existing laws and regulations. In the beginning of January 1966, the High Court gave judgment in favour of Dr Abu Mahmud. At the instigation of the Government in power, the members of National Student Federation – a student front established directly under the patronage of the Government, assaulted Dr Abu Mahmud seriously. For nearly two weeks, there were fighting and counter fighting among the groups of students which had paralyzed the normal life of the University Campus. This incident created very strong reaction among the teachers of the Dhaka University. In this crucial situation it was Professor A.B.M. Habibullah who fearlessly reacted to these incidents and the role played by the University and the Government. Professor Habibullah urged upon the Government to show its goodwill and determination to clear the accumulated evils in the Dhaka University and restore normal academic atmosphere by instituting a judicial enquiry commission for investigation into the matter. Referring to the Government Press Note and Governor's comments to the Press which say that setting up of such a commission was not permissible and advisable as the Police was already investigating some cases in connection with the incidents, Professor Habibullah maintained that such an enquiry demanded by the teachers of the University. Professor Habibullah further said that 'the doubts which have arisen in the minds of people about the administration of the University could only be dispelled after a thorough investigation by a judicial enquiry commission.'[3]

The Dhaka University authority reacted very seriously to the statement issued by Professor A.B.M. Habibullah and some other teachers of the University. The Dhaka University Syndicate opposed the 'Press statement issued by Dr A.B.M. Habibullah, Head of the Department of Islamic History and Culture regarding the recent University disturbances criticising the Chancellor's statement and Government Press Note and his presiding over teachers' meeting in which resolution were taken casting aspersions on the University administration.'[4] Accordingly the Syndicate appointed Dr Serajul Huq, Dean of the Faculty of Arts to investigate the allegations brought against Professor A.B.M. Habibullah. But the authority of the Dhaka University failed to prove anything.

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[3] *The Pakistan Observer*, 28 February 1966.

[4] Extract from the Minutes of the Syndicate held on 29 March 1966.

On the Proscription of Books

In between 1948-71, the Government of Pakistan had proscribed more than hundred books written in Bengali and English because these books were considered anti-Islamic, anti-Pakistan and spread provincialism. The Government had proscribed some important books like Dr Rajendra Prasad's *India Divided*, Phillip K. Hitti's *History of the Arabs,* H. G. Well's *The Outline of History, The Concise Oxford Dictionary,* Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Barnard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, Jyoti Sengupta's *Eclipse of East Pakistan*, Penhum Bin Ham's *The Turkish Art of Love in Pictures*, Kamruddin Ahmed's *The Social History of East Pakistan,* and many other books by renowned Bengali authors. In January 1971, Professor A.B.M. Habibullah had launched a protest movement and he received spontaneous support from all the intellectuals who believed in Bengali nationalism. Professor A.B.M. Habibullah termed such proscriptions as anti-academic, because he firmly believed in freedom of will and liberty of speech.

On the Autonomy of the Universities

Professor Habibullah was very keen for the autonomy of the Universities. He disliked the Ordinance of 1961 which considered inappropriate for the development of intellectual activities. On 9 June, 1969, he wrote a letter to Dr G.W. Chowdhury, Director of Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad that 'You remember the manner in which the Ordinance of the Dacca University was promulgated when no opinion or comment was invited or even allowed. As we all know, the result was not good either for those directly involved or for the Government. University Autonomy has many aspects, and needs a built-in-system of balance and checks. In spelling these out in legal terms, care is necessary lest autonomy of one unit cancels the autonomy of another, or administrative or political autonomy runs away with intellectual freedom of teachers, while aiming to reach the ideals our social reality—also has to be kept in view constantly, as also the ultimate purpose of the University—the advancement and propagation of higher learning and the generating of ideas and intellectual leadership. Selection and appointment of Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Syndicate and Senate, the extent and areas where student participation can be helpful etc., are matters of vital importance in bringing about a healthy, self-correcting institution.'[5]

[5] Letter from Dr A.B.M. Habibullah, President of the Dacca University Teachers Association to Dr G.W. Chowdhury, Director of Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, 9 June 1969. Source: The Personal Documents of Dr A.B.M. Habibullah.

On the Demand of Repealing the University Ordinance of 1961

In the fateful days of the history of East Bengal i.e., 1969-1971 Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was the President of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association which was considered as the 'Voice of the country'. However, on 13 February 1971, a deputation of nine teachers of different Universities of East Pakistan under the leadership of Professor Habibullah met the Chancellor of the Universities to press their demand to repeal the University Ordinance of 1961. The Chancellor, Vice Admiral S.M. Ahsan, wanted seven days time to decide the issue. Professor Habibullah said that if nothing satisfactory was done within the specified time, the teachers would resort to extreme measure. Pointing the defects of the present ordinance Professor Habibullah said the ordinance was totally undemocratic and its replacement by democratic principles to allow greater participation of the teachers in University administration was a must. 'We want democratic order in every sphere of the University administration', Dr Habibullah added. He alleged that under the present ordinance the Vice-Chancellor was 'an all powerful man' and the decision taken by the Vice-Chancellor on any matter should be considered as final. Speaking on the greater participation of the teachers Dr Habibullah held the view that this could be done by forming a Senate which would be an elected body and would look after the affairs of the University. He observed that under the present ordinance there was no elected representative in the University Syndicate. About the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor he said that the present method of appointment was against democratic principles.[6]

The long-cherished desire of Professor Habibullah was fulfilled after the independence of Bangladesh and by the enactment of Dhaka University Ordinance, 1973. According to the suggestion of Professor Habibullah nearly similar Ordinances have been enacted for all the Universities of Bangladesh. These ordinances have empowered the University for exercising maximum autonomy without any state intervention.

Martial Law Authorities vis-à-vis Professor Habibullah

But in the beginning of March 1971, the situation of East Pakistan had started to deteriorate seriously. On 26 March the Army started large-scale genocide. The magnitude of the destruction in the Dhaka University area was so heavy that it had not been possible to open the University before 2 August 1971.

[6] "Teachers Meet Chancellor – Repeal Varsity Ordinance", *The Pakistan Observer*, 14 February 1971.

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The Martial Law Authorities ordered the Heads of the Departments in the University to join the offices before 21 April 1971. Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was forced to join, because he could not avail any chance to leave the country, when the Pakistani army was very active in killing the Bengali intellectuals. The order of the Martial Law Authorities was followed by another order to join the teachers on 1 June 1971. The collaborators of the Pakistani army quickly joined the departments. Meanwhile the news of large-scale genocide committed by the Pakistani army in East Pakistan was diffused by the media and consequently in the beginning of May 1971, the International Committee on University Emergency (ICUE) expressed great anxiety over the killing of the intellectuals by the Pakistani Army. In these circumstances several teachers of Dhaka University were sent to some countries in order to counteract statement of the International Committee on University Emergency and also to convey the news of normalcy in East Pakistan. Dr Sajjad Hussain, Mohar Ali and Din Muhammad were sent to England and America. On 18 May, the Martial Law Authorities requested Professor A.B.M. Habibullah to visit Yugoslavia for the same purpose. His answer to this request was obviously negative. But in a very gentle manner he expressed his inability to leave the country due to his family problems. The rejection of the request of the Martial Law Authorities had not been treated as normal. Meanwhile the collaborator teachers had succeeded to earwig the Martial Law Authorities about the past anecdotes of Professor Habibullah. It is noteworthy that Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was invited by the Wolfsan College of the Oxford University as visiting Professor in 1970. He applied for leave to the University which was granted. But the date was not fixed. But later Professor Habibullah considered his life in danger in East Pakistan and tried to go to London with family. He requested the State Bank of Pakistan to provide him necessary foreign exchange. But the authority of the State Bank of Pakistan regretted their inability without mentioning any reason. On 29 June 1971 Professor Habibullah met the Chief Marshal Law Administrator with a letter which contained his grievances.[7] On 15 July he received a letter from the Martial Law Authorities that 'It is regretted that unless your case has been rooted through the Department in which you are serving at present, giving due sanction, this HQ is not in a position to do anything in the matter please.'[8] Curiously enough, still then Professor Habibullah could not discover the nature of case instituted against

[7] Letter from A.B.M. Habibullah to the Martial Law Administrator, (Zone B), Civil Affairs Branch, Governor's House, Dacca, 29 June 1971. (Personal Correspondence)

[8] Letter from Major Sardar Khan, Major General Staff to A.B.M. Habibullah, 15 July 1971. (Personal Correspondence)

him. He sent several letter to the Martial Law Authorities mentioning his appointment as Visiting Professorship to the Wolfsan College of the Oxford University. On 19 July Professor Habibullah received a letter from the Registrar of the Dhaka University regarding the sanction of 6 months leave.[9] On 4 September 1971, the service of Professor Habibullah as Professor and as Head of the Department was terminated by the Martial Law Authority. 'In exercise of the power conferred on me by the Chief Martial Law Administrator under MLR 80, I, Lt., General Tikka khan, HQA, S.PK., as Martial Law Administrator, Zone 'B' and in the capacity as Chancellor of the Dacca University, hereby terminate your service, Dr A.B.M. Habibullah, Head of Islamic History department of the Dacca University with immediate effect.'[10]

On 21 September 1971, Professor Habibullah wrote a letter to the Registrar of the Dhaka University requesting him to pay his provident fund and other legitimate dues without delay. 'On the 4th September 1971 the Acting Vice-Chancellor delivered me a sealed envelope marked SECRET containing what purported to be an order dated the 1st September 1971 addressed to me and signed by Lt. General Tikka Khan, Martial Law Administrator Zone 'B' terminating, in the capacity of Chancellor of the University of Dacca and MLA, my service with immediate effect, without assigning any reason. Under the circumstances I request you to please arrange to pay all my provident fund and other legitimate dues without delay.'[11]

But he had not received any money even before 1st week of October 1971. In these circumstances Professor Habibullah wrote a letter to the Registrar of the Dhaka University on 2 October 1971, requesting him to pay his provident fund quickly. 'As I have no other alternative source of livelihood and have consequently lived on my savings I request you once again to please expedite the payment without delay. Since, after having served the University for more than twenty-one years my service is purported to have been terminated without cause, without notice, without hearing, and on the face of an existing contract with the University, I should expect that in the interest of justice and fair-play the University would clear my dues without further delay if not with equal promptitude.' (Letter from A.B.M. Habibullah to the Registrar of the University of Dhaka, 2 October 1971. Personal Correspondence)

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[9] Letter from the Registrar, University of Dhaka to the Martial Law Administrator, (Zone B), Civil Affairs Branch, Governor's House, Dacca, 19 July 1971. (Personal Correspondence)

[10] D-Register, Dhaka University Record Room.

[11] Letter from A.B.M. Habibullah to the Registrar of the University of Dhaka, 21 September 1971. (Personal Correspondence)

The reason of this undignified treatment towards a senior-most Professor was that on 21 September Professor Habibullah wrote a letter to the Registrar of the Dhaka University where he used the word 'Acting Vice-Chancellor' as the Martial Law Authority nominated 'Vice-Chancellor' and Dr Syed Sajjad Hussain did not like such address and he took revenge.

In the month of September, a Police Constable forcibly took away the personal car of Professor Habibullah which was returned to him on 9 October. Later Professor Habibullah received the permission from the Martial Law Authority for going abroad. In London Professor Habibullah met Justice Abu Syed Chowdhury, the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and ultimately joined the liberation war of Bangladesh. Professor Habibullah had not returned even before March 1972. On 13 March 1972, Professor Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University, wrote to Professor Habibullah that 'It is our fundamental duty to restore the dignity and intellectual integrity and freedom of the University. In this difficult situation the University *(sic)* needs very much your valuable guidance, advice and active participation. I know how dear the true freedom of the University to you is. I assure, you, Sir, I will leave no stone unturned in this respect. There are considerable evil forces to be removed. These forces are quickly changing their character. At this critical moment your presence in the University is absolutely necessary. The order of Tikka Khan is not valid. It stands cancelled. You continue to be the Professor as usual.'[12]

Professor Habibullah returned to Bangladesh and again joined in his own department with previous position and dignity. Later he rendered valuable services as the Chairman of the newly created Bangladesh University Grants Commission. As the Chairman of the Bangladesh University Grants Commission, Professor Habibullah had extended financial support for historical research and also to conduct survey on historical source materials available in the country, their collections including publications. I do not like to mention the names of those who were directly benefited by the financial assistance from the Bangladesh University Grants Commission during the Chairmanship of Professor Habibullah. Later Professor Habibullah became the Professor Emeritus.

Professor Habibullah and Bangladesh Historical Society

After the creation of Pakistan on the basis of Two-Nation Theory, the Government of Pakistan always emphasised on preaching of Pakistani

[12] Letter from Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury to A.B.M. Habibullah, 13 March 1972. (Personal Correspondence of A.B.M. Habibullah.)

nationalism and identity. But Professor Habibullah believed in secular Bengali nationalism. The Bangladesh Historical Society was the brain-child of Professor Habibullah. He was an enthusiastic lover of Bengali language and Bengali identity. Bengali was the only medium in all the proceeding, presentation of research papers and publication of journals of the Bangladesh Historical Society. Professor Habibullah wrote more than 50 articles and presidential addresses in Bengali. After the demise of Professor Habibullah, the Bangladesh Historical Society published a commemoration volume where valuable articles were dedicated to his memory.

Compatriots vis-à-vis Professor Habibullah

Professor Habibullah is very well-known figure for institution building. It was him who had initiated the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan which later, in 1972, was renamed as the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. But curiously enough, Banglapedia has made a sarcastic remark about Ahmed Hasan Dani that 'He (Dani) may be called the William Jones of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan.' While recognizing Professor Habibullah as the founding member, the article mentions that Ahmed Hasan Dani was the key person among founding members of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan. It is worthy to mention that Ahmed Hasan Dani who was the first General Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan wrote in the Annual Report that 'But the real credit for suggesting to have an Asiatic Society of Pakistan goes to our another silent worker in historical studies, A.B.M. Habibullah. He was keen on establishing a sort of mother-society that will cater for the needs of all the scholars working in different field of research.'[13]

It is pertinent to ask another question here that if Ahmed Hasan Dani, one of the prominent historians of the sub-continent, who served the Dhaka University as Reader of the Department of History from 1950 to 1962, was the key person among founding members of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, then why his biography could not be added in the *Banglapedia?* Professor Habibullah had rendered valuable services for the development of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan and later Bangladesh. When financial assistance from the Government was very limited, the quarterly Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh had been kept continued without any break in the series.

[13] Report of the General Secretary for the First Annual Meeting of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, held on 28 March 1952.

The old Sanskrit dictum suggests that '*Satyam Badeth, Priyam Badeth, Ma Badeth Satyam Apriyam*' which means 'speak the truth, speak the pleasant words, but don't speak the unpleasant truth'; but at the fag end of my life I am forced by my conscience to speak the unpleasant truth regarding the unhappy days of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah. Now I can mention all that happened during his life in Pakistan as well as in Bangladesh. Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was a man who believed in freedom of will and liberty of speech. But the atmosphere in Pakistan was not suitable for him in this regard.

However, in 1979, a tragic incident occurred in the formation of the Executive Council of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Prior to this, there was no election, though there were provisions for election in the constitution of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. In the beginning the names of renowned persons from various disciplines were proposed in the Annual meeting. Somebody would second the proposal and it was carried out. But in 1979, a vested interest group demanded election which the then Executive Council accepted. This vested interest group carried out mischievous propaganda against the existing Executive Council and applying other tactics and through this they won the election. Later they changed the Constitution in order to satisfy their own end. I think that gross injustice had been done on the founding members of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh like Professor Habibullah. Besides these, the frequent changes and amendments of the Constitution of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh has, in turn, made the society undemocratic and one-man-institution with all its evils.

As a son of Burdwan, Professor A.B.M. Habibullah embraced Bangladesh as his own country to live in, joined Dhaka University in 1950, became the Head of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, and continued to serve the Department till his retirement in 1973. He was Dean of the Faculty of Arts (1961-63), President of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (1968-72), Chairman, University Grants Commission (1976-77) and Curator of Dhaka Museum. He was one of the founders of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, which later became the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Professor Habibullah had rendered valuable service to the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh when this academic institution suffered seriously from the financial stringency. In fact Professor Habibullah had left his motherland and picked up East Bengal as his homeland where he had initiated so many good things with success. With the institution building activities, Professor Habibullah simultaneously had continued his historical researches as well. I am hopeful that the history of Bangladesh will certainly depict the true picture and real contributions of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah in near future.

A Tribute to the Memory of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah

KAZI SUFIOR RAHAMAN[1]

Professor Abu Bakth Mahamet Habibullah was an erudite scholar, respected teacher and reputed historian. The teaching career of A.B.M. Habibullah covered a period of almost fifty years that touched four separate rules of governments i.e. of the British Government, and the Government of India, that of Pakistan and of Bangladesh.

Abu Bakth Mahamet Habibullah was born on 30 November 1911 in an educated and well-established family of Bamunia, under the police station of Raina of the district of Burdwan. His grandfather Moulavi Muhammad Miyan was a teacher at the Department of Arabic-Persian of Hooghly Madrasah and his father Moulavi Abdul Latif was a school inspector of Burdwan division, and both of them had acquired profound knowledge in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages and literature.[2] Therefore, the instinct for acquiring knowledge in Arabic-Persian and Urdu languages came down to him as an inherited quality. It is learnt from his family source that the British Government conferred the title Khan Bahadur to Moulavi Muhammad Miyan; therefore, it may be claimed that this family was not against the British politically.[3] The Muslims of Bengal traditionally use Muhammad or Mohammad as prefix of the original name, but the application of the spelling of Mahamet as prefix of his name is something different that indicates the cultural trait of the family. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that that he had a Bengali nickname and he was much more familiar in the name Banku or Banku Miyan among his family members or friend circles.[4]

Having acquired primary school education at his ancestral village Bamunia, he was admitted to Madrasah College following the tradition and culture of his family, where Arabic-Persian subjects had been offered along

[1] The author of this article pays homage to the memory of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah who was the erstwhile teacher at the Department of Islamic History and Culture during the period 1940-1950.

[2] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *Abu Mahamet Habibullah*, Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1989, p. 9.

[3] Interview with Munshi Muhammad Sirajuddin (65) of Bamunia on 27.02.2012.

[4] *Ibid.*

with his main subject History. He obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees respectively from the Dacca Madrasah and the Hooghly Madrasah. Like the previous examinations, he secured first class marks in MA in History from University of Calcutta in 1933. In 1934, A.B.M. Habibullah went to London bagging Lytton Scholarship to pursue his PhD degree. He was very much dedicated to his study and he obtained PhD degree (1936) from School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London within two years of his three-year long scholarship. Therefore, he utilized very fruitfully the rest of the period of his scholarship and two diploma certificates came to his possession during the period. He got the certificate in Library Science from the School of Librarianship, University of London in 1937. The dream of his father and grandfather was fulfilled when he earned diploma in Arabic epigraphy and numismatics from the British Museum in the same year.[5] Habibullah's love for Persian and Arabic languages no doubt proved that the influence of his family and the traditional values of the Muslims of Bengal worked upon him very much. Apart from gaining mastery on the languages like English, Urdu, Arabic, Persian etc. he also acquired the knowledge of languages namely Germany and Russian.

Professor A.B.M. Habibullah was a man who always took lessons from history. He had definite political philosophy and socio-political consciousness since his studentship. The trends of his writings and speeches bear sufficient evidence of his progressive and secular outlook. On 11 September 1928, the student wings of *Bangiya Pradeshik Muslim League* (BPML) organised a conference at Burdwan town entitled as 'All Bengal Young Men Muslim Conference', where Habibullah addressed to the gathering criticizing the politics of BPML. The lecture of a student like Habibullah was significant in the backdrop of the contemporary politics of Bengal. He clarified in the meeting that the participation of the students in non-cooperation movement was a necessity of time, but the Muslim student movement as reflected in the present politics was nothing but emotional in nature. He remarked that one day these intolerant and emotional campaigns would accept defeat and reason and rationalism would prevail in the society.[6]

In 1938, he joined Alia Madrasah as a librarian and in next year, he was appointed as a Lecturer in the Department of History, University of Calcutta. In 1940, his assignment was switched over to the newly introduced Department of Islamic History and Culture of the same university in the same capacity. After the partition of Bengal (1947), he preferred to stay in

[5] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 10
[6] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 26-7

Calcutta, but the circumstances led him to accept the service of the University of Dacca. In March 1950, he migrated to Dacca and joined an open post in the capacity of Reader and Head of the newly created Department of Islamic History and Culture of the Dacca University, when he was only forty years of age.

The emergence of the theory of socialism and its implication in different parts of the world attracted young Habibullah. He also witnessed the fascist aggression and the rise of Nazism in Europe as a deterrent to emergence of socialism. A.B.M. Habibullah was an anti-fascist and strong supporter of progressive forces until his death. The views of Professor Habibullah on socialism had been published in an article entitled, 'Bengal's Urgent Needs' in *the Congress Socialist* on 9 October 1938. He wrote, 'News of the opening at Lucknow of a school of socialism is welcome. It will help those who, while psychologically prepared for socialism are yet unable to arrive at it through a rational understanding of its fundamental concepts. And this number is fairly large. ... Let other provinces follow particularly Bengal where the need is much greater. A socialist weekly in Bengal and a School of Socialism are our urgent needs—may I ask the Bengal C.S.P. through you to take up the matter?'[7]

Professor Habibullah detected an unmistakable fascist flame in the political and cultural propaganda of the Muslim League. He sincerely believed that the fascist philosophy might be harmful for Indian civilization and the socialist pattern of democracy would be more helpful for the underdeveloped country. His strong feeling of repugnance to fascism and attraction toward socialism could be noticed in his writings. He wrote an article under the title 'Fascist Propaganda in Near East', which was published in *The Comrade* on 11 March 1939.[8] In fact, he was guided by the principle of humanistic philosophy and progressive secular politics. Therefore, he did not find any contradictions between the ideas of international socialism and humanitarian Gandhism.

Professor Habibullah had a progressive, liberal, rational and secular outlook to Indian society and politics. He was a devoted supporter of the politics of undivided India. Therefore, he never believed in the concept of Aligarh movement, or the separatist politics of Muslim League or Hindu Mahasabha. Habibullah opined that the Muslim politics of partition of India could in no way solve the problem of the Muslims. While the prospect of the partition of Bengal was taking a political shape, he seriously criticised the

[7] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 26
[8] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 25

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motives and activities of the Muslim League leaders. It was true that Habibullah never joined the direct politics, but he often expressed his political opinions and views through the daily newspaper or leading journals of Calcutta. On the eve of the partition of Bengal, he wrote the article 'Kolkatar Mussalman' (in Bengali), where he mentioned that the Muslim League leaders were more interested in 'partition and possession' than the human development.[9] On 15 August 1947, in an independence supplementary volume, *The Statesman* published his article 'Plassey to Pakistan', where Habibullah bitterly criticised the role of the Muslim leaders of Bengal for their unrealistic politics since the days of Plassey to the creation of Pakistan.[10]

Professor Habibullah was an ardent Bengali. Though he believed in the concept of undivided India, but he had always given priority to the importance of Bengal. Even after the partition of Bengal, he never thought that the position of Bengali would be dwindled. In 1948, he wrote in leading newspaper *The Ittehad,*

"হিন্দুস্তান-পাকিস্তান পরিবেষ্টনীতে হয়তো বাঙালীর রাজনৈতিক ইতিহাসের তাৎপর্যও যাবে কমে। তবু গ্রামাশ্রয়ী, নদীমাতৃক বাঙালীর আমূল রূপান্তর হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা দেখিনা। বাঙালী বাঙালীই থাকবে; ইতিহাসের উজান বেয়ে মানসিকতা ও জীবনধারায় যে ঐতিহ্যের নাম বাঙালী, তার তিরোধান সম্ভব বলেই মনে হয়।"[11]

The period between 1938 and 1950, while he was the teacher of the University of Calcutta, may be regarded as the most creative in the field of his academic activities. During this period, apart from his pioneering work entitled *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India,* he wrote many serious articles, which were published in the reputed journals of India like *Indian Historical Quarterly*. The articles published here are: 'Medieval Indo-Persian Literature Relating to Hindu Science and Philosophy' (1938, vol. xiv, no.1), 'A Persian Translation of Vidyasundara' (1939, vol. xv, no.1), 'Sultana Razia' (1940, vol. xvi, no.4), 'Provincial Government under the Mameluke Sultans of Delhi' (1943, vol. xiv), 'The Quest of the Holy Grail', etc.[12] Two articles of Habibullah were published in the Proceedings of the (*PIHC)* namely 'Undiscovered Source Books of Pre-Mughal History' (1939) and 'The First Mongol Attack in India' (1943). *The Hindustan Review* published his articles like 'Mirza Abu Taleb Khan: An Early Indian Visitor to Europe' (1939, vol. lxxi, no. 410) and 'The "Mad" Sultan of India' (1940, vol. lxxiii, no. 425). *Indian Historical Records Commission* published his another article

[9] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 29
[10] *The Statesman*, 15 August 1947
[11] A.B.M. Habibullah, *Samaj Samaskritir Itihas* (in Bengali), Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1968, p. 179
[12] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit*, pp. 57-61

entitled 'Shah Alam's Letter to George III' in 1939, *The Islamic Culture* published his article 'Revolution of the Literary Sources of Pre-Mughal History' in 1941. *New Indian Antiquity* published 'Turkish Attack in Hindustan in the Twelve and Thirteen Centuries' in 1943-44. *The Calcutta Review* published his two articles and these are: 'Organisation of Fighting Forces in the Pre-Mughal Sultanate' and 'Jalaluddin Firoz Khalji: Experiment in Kingship' published in 1943 and 1949, respectively. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1945, vol. xi) and *Proceedings of the Indian Record Commission* (1948) published his articles 'Arakan in the Pre-Mughal History of Bengal' and 'A Firman of Muhammad Shah' respectively.[13] Lastly, Sir Jadunath Sarkar incorporated two articles of A.B.M. Habibullah in his edited volume, *The History of Bengal, Muslim Period,* vol. ii (1948) under the titles 'Later Iliyas Shahis and the Abyssinians (1442-1498)' and 'The Hussain Shahi Dynasty (1493-1538)'.[14] Moreover, he was a regular contributor to *The Statesman* and *The Ittehad* (the reputed Bengali daily) published from Calcutta.

In his early thirties, he became an eminent reviewer in the field of medieval history. In 1938, he reviewed at least one dozen books of reputed historians in *Indian Historical Quarterly*. The first book which he reviewed in *Indian Historical Quarterly* was *A Guide to Fatehpur Sikri of Ashraf Hussain,* H.L. Srivastava (ed.), vol. xiv, 1938. In 1939, *Indian Historical Quarterly* published a compilation of book reviews (vol. xv), where Dr Habibullah contributed at least five reviews i.e. *Futuh us-Salatin* or *The Shahnama of Medieval India* edited by Aga Mahdi Husain, *Mir Qasim: Nawab of Bengal* by Nandalal Chatterjee, *Nadir Shah* by L. Lockhart, *Rise and Fall of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq* by Aga Mahdi Husain, *Tarikh Badshah Begum* by Muhammad Taqi Ahmad. He reviewed *A Bibliography of Mughal India* by Ram Sharma (1940, vol. xvi, no. 1) and *Humayun Badshah* (vol. i) by S.K. Banerjee. (1940, vol. xvi, no. 1). He had also reviewed the books like *Iranian and Indian Analogues of the Legends of the Holy Grail* by Jehangir Cooverjee Coyajee and *Humayun Badshah* (vol. ii) of S.K. Banerjee in the year 1942. In the next year, the book of Muhammad Hussain Nainer entitled *Arab Geographers' Knowledge of South India* (vol. xix) and *Muslim Monuments of Ahmedabad through their Inscriptions* had been reviewed by him.[15]

In January 1950, he was elected president of the section of Early Medieval Period in Indian History Congress, (13th session) at Nagpur. In this

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[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *The History of Bengal*, vol. ii, R.B. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2003 (reprint), pp. 130-65

[15] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-61

connection, a small portion of his presidential address may be mentioned to understand his notion on the responsibility of the historian. He said, 'I look upon this honour not as something which I have earned but as an indication of the confidence my seniors have reposed in my ability to fulfill the promise which I know not how they have seen in me. I shall, therefore, continue to regard this as a trust, remaining ever sacred to me, and demanding the supremest efforts in investigating our past with that passionless quest for truth which my teachers have taught me to accept as the supremest guide.'[16]

After the partition of India, noted Muslim historians like Istiak Hussain Qureshi opted for his service in West Pakistan, while Muhammad Habib, A.B.M. Habibullah and A.F. Salahuddin preferred to work in their local places. However, few factors had forced Habibullah to change his earlier decision. On 19 March 1950, A.B.M. Habibullah joined at Dacca University in the post of Reader and Head of the newly introduced Department with higher scale. Finally, he was selected for the post of professor in the Department of Islamic History and Culture in 1952. As his recruitment in Dacca University was through direct appointment, the University sought opinions for the fixation of scale as well as the scholarship of Dr Habibullah from the contemporary historians like Jadunath Sarkar, Ramesh Chandra Majumder, Suren Sen and Mohammad Habib. Everybody highly certified the scholarship of Dr Habibullah. In this connection, the recommendation letter of Ramesh Chandra Majumder is worth mentioning. He wrote, 'Dr A.B.M. Habibullah is a very promising scholar and I am sure he will prove an asset to your University though it is a distinct loss to the University of Calcutta.'[17]

There is no clear-cut statement on behalf of Professor Habibullah as to why did he quit the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Calcutta. Certainly, there are several assumptions and explanations or hypotheses from the intellectuals behind the cause of his migration to Dacca University from a premier institution like University of Calcutta.

Finally, I would like to quote from the esteemed writing of Professor A.F. Salahuddin on Professor A.B.M. Habibullah in original as a part of the conclusion of my humble attempt of remembering one of the founder teachers of the Department.

"ডঃ হবিবুল্লাহর সঙ্গে আমার শিক্ষক অধ্যাপক সুশোভন সরকারের যেন একটা মিল খুঁজে পেয়েছিলাম। উভয়েই স্বল্প ও মৃদুভাষী, কিছুটা লাজুক প্রকৃতির এবং প্রকাশ্য জনসভায় না এসে নিজেদের প্রচ্ছন্ন রাখতেই ভালোবাসতেন। শ্রেণীকক্ষের বাইরে বক্তৃতা দিতে চাইতেন না। কিন্তু উভয়েই ছিলেন তীক্ষ্ণ মেধা-সম্পন্ন। ব্যক্তিত্বের ভিন্ন একটা

[16] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 95
[17] Ratan Lal Chakraborty, *op.cit.*, p. 15

ধরন খুব সহজেই চোখে পড়তো। উভয়েই বৈজ্ঞানিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি এবং সংস্কারমুক্ত উদার মানবতাবাদী চিন্তাধারার বাহক ছিলেন। আমি যে সময়ের কথা বলছি তখন সাম্প্রদায়িকতার উত্তাল তরঙ্গে এই উপমহাদেশের গোটা মুসলমান সমাজ নিমজ্জিত। স্বচ্ছ উদার চিন্তা-চেতনার খুবই অভাব। ব্যতিক্রম যে নেই তা নয়। আমাদের মতো মুষ্টিমেয় অর্বাচীন কতিপয় মুসলিম যুবক যারা এই তরঙ্গের বিরুদ্ধে দাঁড়াবার অক্ষম চেষ্টা করছিলাম তাদের প্রেরণা ও সাহস জুগিয়েছিলেন ডঃ হবিবুল্লাহ্‌র মতো প্রমুখ বুদ্ধিজীবী। ইসলামের ইতিহাস ও ধর্মতত্ত্ব সম্বন্ধে যেমন ছিল তার গভীর জ্ঞান, তেমনি আরবী-ফারসী ও উর্দুভাষায় ছিল তাঁর অসাধারণ বুৎপত্তি। তাঁর ফলে জবরদস্ত মৌলভী মৌলানারাও তাঁকে ঘাটাতে সাহস পেতেন না। তিনিই এদেশে ইসলামের সুমহান ঐতিহ্য সম্বন্ধে আমাদের সচেতন করে তুলেছিলেন। তাঁর মতে এদেশে ইসলাম এসেছে মোল্লাদের ধর্মান্ধতা বা স্বৈরাচারী সুলতানদের তরবারীর সাহায্যে নয়, যতটা এসেছে মানবতাবাদী সুফি সাধকদের শান্তিময় পথে। তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন সংঘাত ও বিচ্ছিন্নতার মধ্যে নয়, শান্তিপূর্ণ সমন্বয়ের মধ্য দিয়ে এদেশে ইসলামের সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্য টিকে থাকবে।"[18]

[18] Salauddin Ahmed, 'Abu Mahamet Habibullah: Sradhanjali', *Sambad*, (Bengali), 7 June 1984, p. 4

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"Empericism...by Compromise and Improvisation"—A Lens for the Early Islamic Architecture of Bengal

PERWEEN HASAN

In his Preface to the first edition of *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, Professor A.B.M. Habibullah wrote, 'After the Arab and Ghaznavide premilinaries the Ghorid conquest planted the Muslim Turks in North India, firmly determined to rule and settle in the country. They became instrumental in the diffusion of those cultural elements of Islam which were to dominate Indian life for several centuries. ...yet underlying the new values, was the continuity of Indian institutions and ways of life which the new rulers had little capacity or desire to alter drastically. ...their empiricism, however, proved a great asset and by compromise and improvisation they brought the foundation process to a successful close.'[1]

Although made in the context of North India, 'empiricism', known through 'compromise' and 'improvisation' would also be an apt lens to view the early history of Bengal, particularly its architectural history. This early period starts with the Turkish conquest of the early thirteenth century and may be stretched up to the Mughal takeover in the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century. The conquest brought new groups of people into the region. They came from the arid desert or rocky regions of West Asia to deltaic Bengal, with their own distinctive culture, language and religion, all of which impacted on and transformed the land in significant ways. They brought Islam, a strictly monotheistic religion into a land where people were polytheistic and worshipped many deities. The meeting of these two seemingly opposed traditions provided fecund ground for an architecture that flowered into one of the most distinctive regional styles of India.

Within this early period, dynasties of Independent rulers who unyoked themselves from the Delhi Sultanate ruled in Bengal from AD 1338 up to the Mughal takeover. Their political and geographical parting from Delhi meant a cultural divorce from North India and beyond and was an incentive for the growth of a provincial culture under the patronage of the independent rulers.

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[1] A.B.M. Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India: A History of the Establishment and Progress of the Turkish Sultanate of Delhi: 1206-1290 A.D.*, Preface to the First Edition (Calcutta, 1945), 3rd revised ed. (Calcutta, 1976), p. ix.

These independent Muslim rulers ensured the support of the local people through their patronage of local culture and recruitment of Bengali officials into their service. These steps were also strategically expedient to defend their kingdom against consistent threats from Delhi as well as the belligerent neighbours that surrounded Bengal. The patronage of the Sultans saw a flowering of Bengali literature, where alongside translations of the Mahabharata from Sanskrit and narrative poems on Hindu gods and goddesses, there were *punthis* on the life and adventures of the Prophet Muhammad, the stories being presented in a manner that resonated with the natural environment of the newly converted Muslims. This spirit of adaptation is most vivid in the architecture of the Independent Sultanate, which surpassed the written texts in its ability to establish its message of independence from Delhi.

The Sultans turned architecture into a powerful visual and physical symbol of the new identity that was being forged, using it to convey messages appropriate to their desired public image. By using features that were grounded locally but fortified with new technology, they created forms unknown in brick architecture elsewhere. Anchored in this period, this paper will attempt to trace the process of identity formation of the Muslims through significant extant monuments in Bengal, now divided between Bangladesh and West Bengal in India.

The examples are furnished mostly from mosques, not only because they survive in the largest numbers, but also because they are the most representative of Islamic culture. They were built for the congregational performance of ritual prayers enjoined on all believing Muslims. Although daily prayers may be performed individually, believing men must pray collectively on Friday afternoons. This requires a large space where devotees can stand in neat rows to face the *qibla* or direction of the Ka'aba in Mecca, due west in South Asia. As proper orientation is an obligation for ritual prayer, the *qibla* marker is built into the wall as an arched niche or *mihrab* (Fig. 1). A *khutba*, or sermon read in the name of the ruler followed the Friday prayer and became an indispensable adjunct. Consequently Friday mosques (*Jama Masjid*) also became an important attribute to political authority.

As the sacred texts do not prescribe any specification for mosque building, its basic form evolved out of the ritual needs of the Muslims. Besides the functional need of space and orientation, other determining factors were climate, available materials, technology, skills of local craftsmen, and the

personal preferences of patrons. Mosques became the signature buildings of Muslims everywhere, but their form and appearance were determined by an empirical process in which all the above mentioned variables came into play, resulting in amazing new innovations. The first buildings in any newly conquered region were usually an assemblage of old and new materials, with clearly visible signs of recycled material (in the case of India and Bengal, this would be of temples) which showcased the power of the new rulers. In later buildings, the use of older material was usually more discreet. But even when the building material was fresh, the indigenous craftsmen (probably coming from the caste of builders) left an indelible local imprint on the monuments.

If at all known, mosques were probably rare in pre-conquest Bengal. So the new buildings combined old forms with new and endowed new meanings to them. The resulting Bengal style had a vibrant life first in the Islamic architecture of the Sultanate, then lived on in temple architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, having an active total life of almost four hundred years. The Mughal exoticised features such as the *chala* roof and turned them into distinctive decorative elements.

Being a delta, Bengal had an ancient brick and terracotta tradition. Stone was not available and whenever used was either culled from older buildings or brought down the Ganges from Bihar. In their layout, early Bengal mosques differed from those of north India and the central Islamic lands, because they lacked a central enclosed courtyard and had multiple domes and *mihrabs*. The Mosque of Zafar Khan Ghazi of AD 1298 in Tribeni, West Bengal, the earliest dated Islamic building in Bengal, establishes the type (Fig. 2). Although not an Islamic invention, domes were considered an important marker for Islamic buildings, distinguishing them from the temples with their *shikharas* or towers. Every *mihrab* in the west wall is opposite to an entrance in front. This alignment resonates with the interior arrangement of temples where there is always an image niche opposite to an entrance. In the absence of early brick temples in Bengal, we may turn to the neighbouring state of Myanmar to illustrate our point. These small temples from Hmawza, attributed to the eighth century, have either a single entrance in front with an image niche at the far end as in the BebePaya Temple (Figs 3-4), or entrances on four sides leading to image niches on four sides of a central obelisk as in the Lemyethna Temple (Figs 5-6). As Buddhism had travelled to Myanmar and beyond from eastern India, one may suggest that there were also prototypes of the Myanmar temples in Bengal.

Buddhist manuscripts illustrate some temples in Bengal as a small chamber holding the image of a deity as the *shikhara-shirsha bhadra* temple

of Varendra (ancient North Bengal) in a manuscript of the *Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita* copied in Nepal in AD 1015.[2] In this case the small *shikhara* is the only indication of the temple's function. As large forest tracts made wood easily available, the illustrated temple could be constructed of wood. Its small size and simplicity of structure points to the village hut as a possible source.

The only mosque ever designed after those of the central Islamic lands was the Adina (Friday) Mosque of Pandua, West Bengal (Fig. 7). The largest in South Asia, it was built in AD 1375 by Sultan Sikandar Shah of the independent Ilyas Shahi dynasty. The monumental *iwan* (the vaulted hall of the prayer chamber, derived from Persian architecture) has fallen, perhaps because Bengali craftsmen had not mastered the technology of building vaults of such proportions. The *iwan* provided an unimpeded view of the magnificent *mihrab* wall with the canopied *mimbar* from where the *imam* or prayer leader delivered his Friday sermon. Upholding the tradition of multiple domes and *mihrabs*, the Adina has a staggering number of three hundred and eighty-seven domes and thirty-nine *mihrabs*. Although there is plenty of reused material, the judicious manner in which it is used indicates that the primary motive was not to convey a message of political subjugation to the non-Muslim population and that the rulers had moved on from their earlier position of displaying power by blatantly exhibiting the use of temple spoil.[3] The image of the *kirtimukha* now exposed but originally hidden from view behind a staircase slab of the *mimbar* (Fig. 8) illustrates this change of attitude. The foundation inscription on the external west wall of the façade states the real intention. There the Sultan refers to himself as, 'the wisest, the most just, the most liberal, and the most perfect of the Sultans of Arabia and Persia'.[4] No mention of either Bengal or India. Celebrating final defeat of Firuz Shah Tughluq, the Delhi Sultan who had twice attacked Bengal, Sikandar built this huge mosque modelled after those of West Asia to deliberately bypass Delhi and reach his desired source of legitimacy outside India.

Even though the Sultanate attempted to align itself ideologically to the Islamic lands of West Asia, for practical purposes of governance it had to be politically rooted in Bengal. Thus in spite of the ire of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) and Sufis (leaders of mystical orders), the Bengali Hindu nobility

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[2] Cambridge University Library manuscript (Add. 1643). Perween Hasan, *Sultans and Mosques*, (2007), Fig. 3.

[3] Naseem Ahmed Banerji, *The Architecture of the Adina Mosque in Pandua, India: Medieval Tradition and Innovation*, Mellen Studies in Architecture, vol. 6, Lewiston, 2002, pp. 15-16.

[4] Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dhaka 1992, pp. 89-90.

were granted positions of local authority. A local dynasty founded by Raja Ganesh testifies to the powerful position that some non-Muslims enjoyed in the Sultanate. He was an aristocratic landholder who took advantage of the turmoil following the reigns of the last weak Ilyas Shahi rulers and occupied the throne. Failing to win the support of the old guard Turkish nobles, he compromised by converting his young son Jadu to Islam, and installed him on the throne as Sultan Jalaluddin Muhammad Shah (AD 1415-32), while he himself ruled as regent. The Eklakhi Tomb in Pandua traditionally believed to be Jalauddin's tomb is the most significant building in the history of Sultanate architecture (Fig. 9). Located near the tomb of his spiritual mentor, Nur Qutb Alam, the Eklakhi is attributed to the fifteenth century and heralds the Bengal Style. Thus it is Jalaluddin, the first Muslim king of Bengali origin who introduced this unique style into the Islamic architecture of Bengal. The local craftsmen's trepidation to build such a huge dome is reflected in the interior which is an octagon within a square, thus minimizing the technical risk of constructing large squinches to hold up the dome. This resulted in walls that were nearly four metres thick. Except for the stone doorways the building is of brick with terracotta and patterned brick decoration. Heavy corner towers seemingly anchor the building. Its most unique feature is the gently bowed cornice of the façade. The curved cornice and corner posts are derived from village huts, which are typically one-roomed structures with walls of either mud or woven bamboo strips, secured by four corner posts. The curvature of the roof eaves is due to the flexibility of the bamboo frame that holds the thatch of the roof together. The roofs, *do-chala* or *char-chala* (Figs 10 and 11), are in two or four sections respectively.

Thus it seems that both brick temples and mosques were ultimately derived from the hut. In the countryside one can still find mosques where the protruding *mihrab* in the west wall is the only indicator of its function; otherwise it is just like another hut that makes up a village homestead. Significantly, irrespective of whether it was a mosque, gateway or shrine, the single-roomed square with a dome became a ubiquitous plan for all buildings. As in the hut, a verandah would sometimes be added in front; its interior vault imitating in brick the woven bamboo patterns of the original.

It was probably the difficult riverine terrain that made the small mosque a judicious choice, like the Mosque at Goaldi, Sonargaon of AD 1519 (Fig. 12). Its exterior decoration of *mihrab* motifs within terracotta panels mark the building's function. It maintains the earlier convention of curved cornice and axial doorways and *mihrabs*. Inside, the central *mihrab* (*see* Fig. 1) has two full-blown lotus motifs on its spandrels reminiscent of the ones held by the Hindu god Surya in medieval temple sculptures. They substitute the more conventional medallion motifs found in mosques elsewhere.

The focus of the mosque's interior, the *mihrab* is often tacitly regarded as its holiest part. Its niche decoration is usually a single or multiple hanging lantern motif as seen in the Adina Mosque (Fig. 13). It becomes fraught with divine symbolism when associated with a Quranic passage which describes God in a simile: 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp... Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. (This lamp is found) in houses which Allah hath allowed to be exalted and that His name shall be remembered therein...'[5]

Here God's light is symbolically described as a lamp within a niche, and His presence is reassured wherever His name is celebrated in prayer; hence the aptness of the image in the *mihrab*.

Large *mihrab* motifs prominently displayed on the exterior *mihrab* projections, remind us of temple projections with recessed niches for exterior images which Stella Kramrisch has explained as a 'massive door which expresses the coming forth of the image from and through the massive wall.'[6] Although Islamic aniconism would not allow a parallel interpretation, the external *mihrab* did emphasize the importance of the central niche inside (Fig.14).

In ancient Indian tradition fruit trees were auspicious and tree spirits were worshipped for the well-being of hearth and home. Islamic paradise symbolism of orchards and gardens suggest the bounties of afterlife. But contemporary Islamic Art historian Oleg Grabar in his *Mediation of Ornament* (1992) writes that lush vegetation '...suggests or evokes life. Without *representing* life, it provides a sense of growth and movement.'[7] One wonders if the profusion of flowering and fruit bearing trees found in *mihrab* surrounds of the Bagha Mosque, Rajshahi dated to AD 1523 (Figs 15 and 16) were made in the same spirit, to side-step the Islamic taboo. Or are they motifs which give 'the observer the right and freedom to choose meanings'?[8]

Specific iconographic motifs complicate the problem further. In the late sixteenth century mosque of Qutb Shah in Ashtogram of Kishoreganj, a *makara* head appears around the doorway frame, marking every node of a curving vine that climbs upwards from a pot, i.e. *purnaghata* (Fig. 17). Both the crocodilian head and the overflowing pot are symbols of life, prosperity

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[5] Sura 24: 35-37. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, An explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, Delhi, 1995 (reprint), p. 256.
[6] Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, Delhi, 1976 (reprint), vol. 2, p. 309.
[7] Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament*, Princeton, 1992, p. 224.
[8] Grabar, p. 237.

and well-being in the context of temple imagery. Stylized purely vegetal renderings of the same motif are common in Sultanate mosques as seen in Kusumba Mosque, Naogaon of AD 1558-59 (Fig. 18). It is difficult to pinpoint the motive of the patron here. We suggest three possibilities:

1. Deliberate defiance of the traditional Islamic reservation against the depiction of living things.

2. Welcome worshippers into an auspicious place, in which case the original meaning of the *makara* vine would be kept intact.

3. Just a decorative motif where the viewer was free to make his own choice of meaning.

The distinctive, regional Bengal style of architecture petered out with the imperial Mughal conquest of the seventeenth century, soon to be replaced by their own brand of buildings. The Bengal style lived on only in the temple tradition, and as exotica in some eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture of North India. European colonial styles finally took over everything.

Professsor Habibullah's book as well as several essays emphasise how early Muslim rule in India had left behind a legacy of cultural development that is the 'India of today and yesterday'.[9] His *Foundation* is not just a political history but a 'history of nation building.'[10] He has inspired many students to look at regional histories, and the formative moments and ingredients of identity. We remember him most respectfully today.

[9] Preface to A.B.M. Habibullah, *Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, p. ix.
[10] M. R. Tarafdar, 'Abu Mohamed Habibullah', in Salahuddin Ahmed *et al.* (eds.), *Abu Mohamed Habibullah Smarak Grantha*, Dhaka, 1991 (in Bengali), p. 2.

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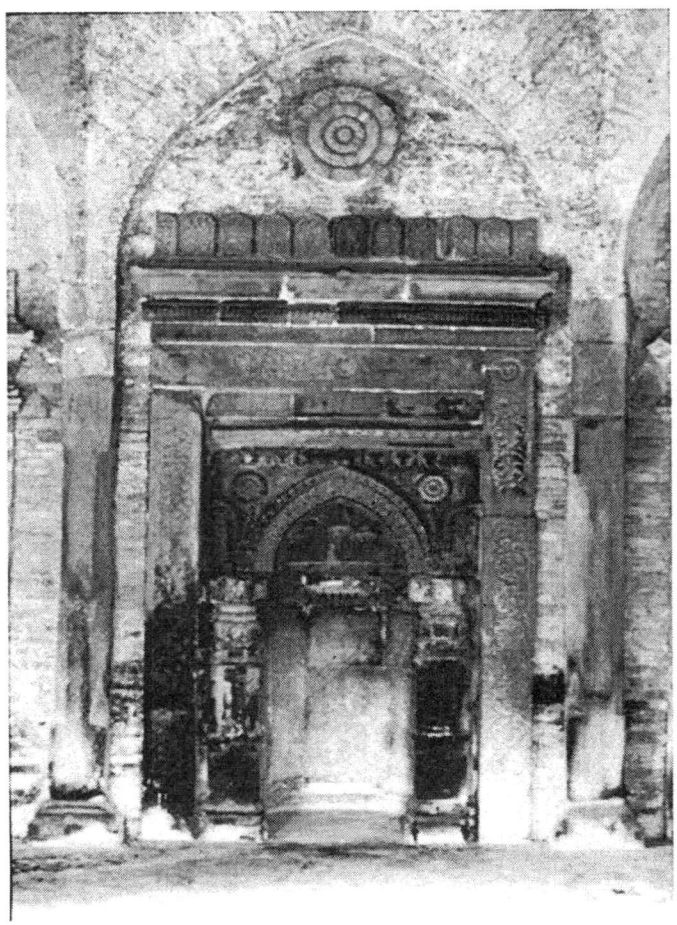

Fig. 1. Sonargaon, Goaldi Mosque, central *mihrab*

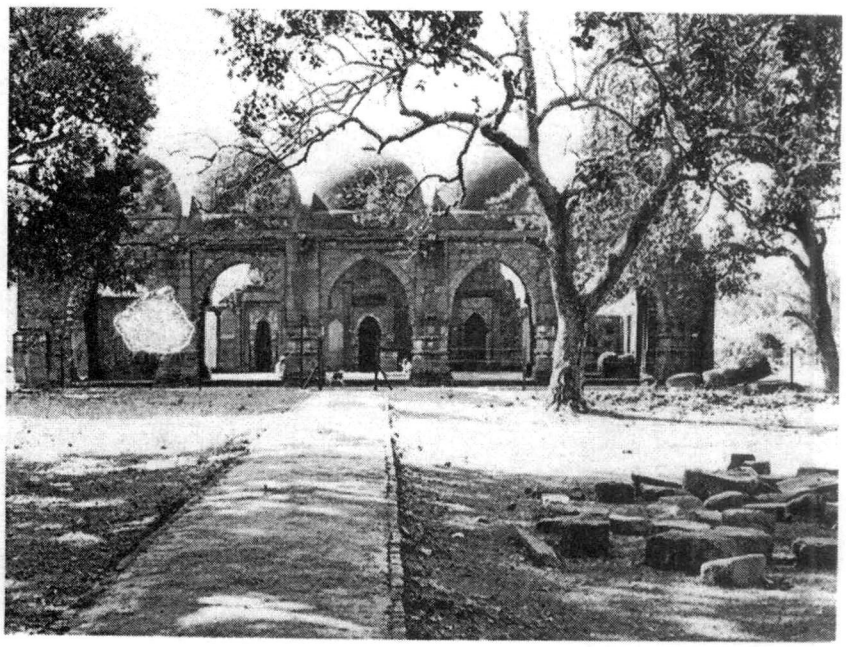

Fig. 2. Tribeni, Zafar Khan Ghazi's Mosque

Fig. 3. Hmawza, BebePaya Temple

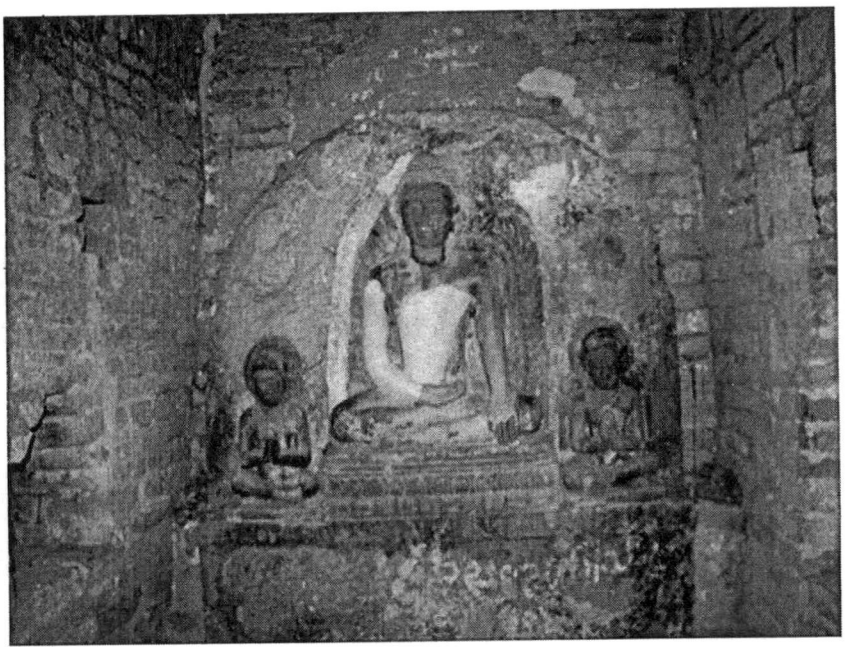

Fig. 4. Hmawza, BebePaya Temple, interior

Fig. 5. Hmawza, Lemyethna Temple

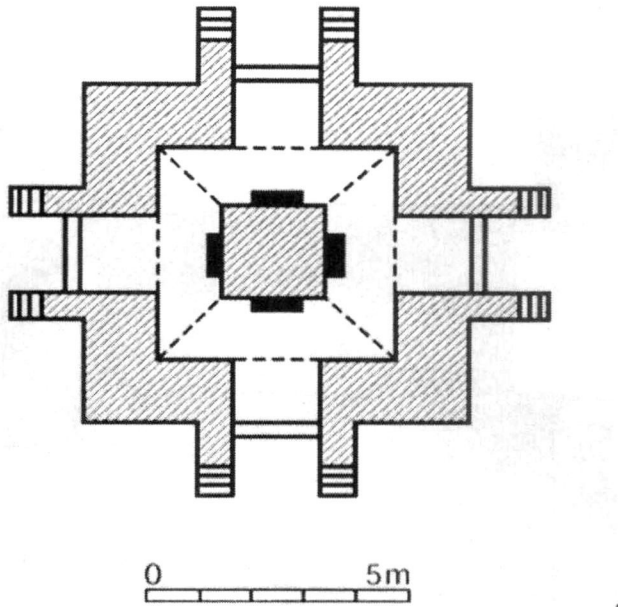

Fig. 6. Hmawza, Lemyethna Temple, plan

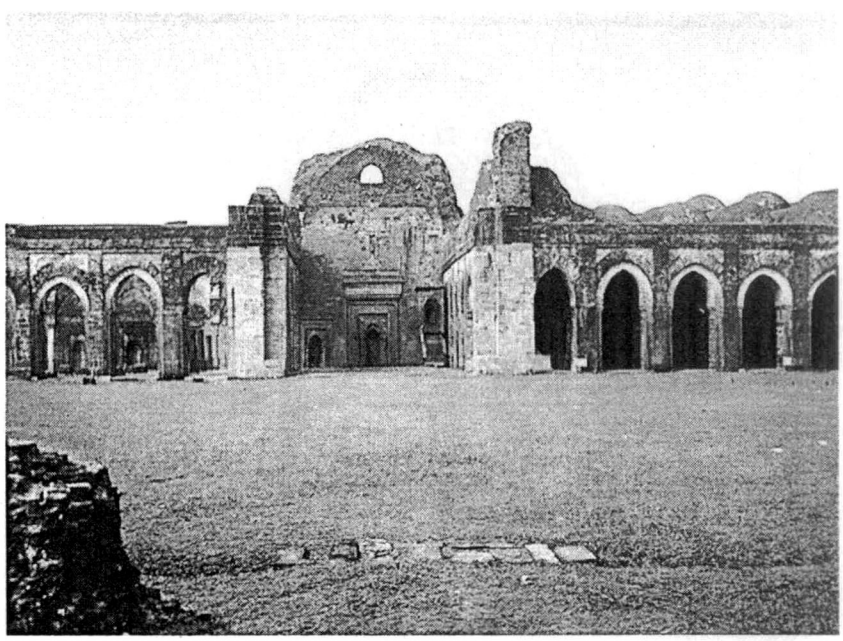

Fig. 7. Pandua, Adina Mosque, interior *mihrab* wall

Fig. 8. Pandua, Adina Mosque, *kirtimukha* behind staircase to *mimbar*

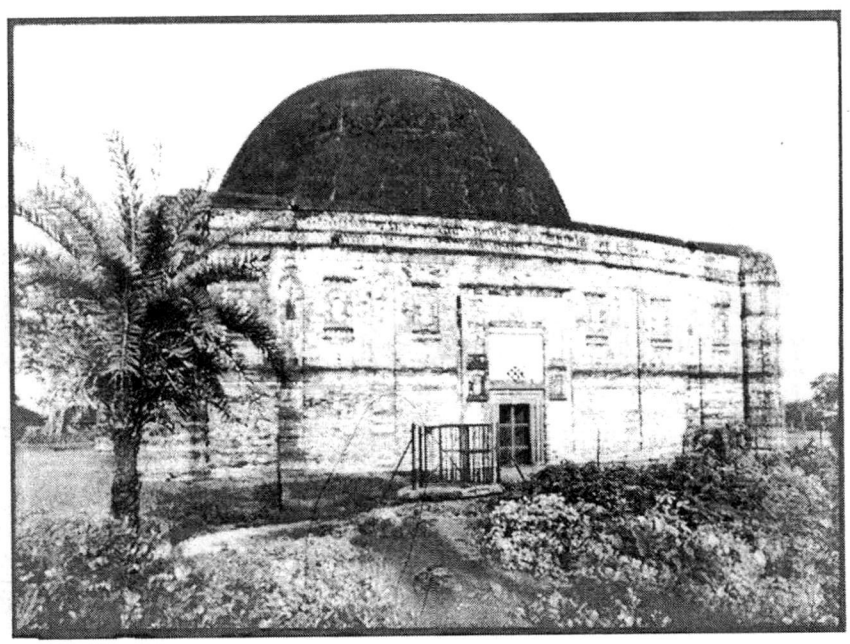

Fig. 9. Pandua, Eklakhi Tomb

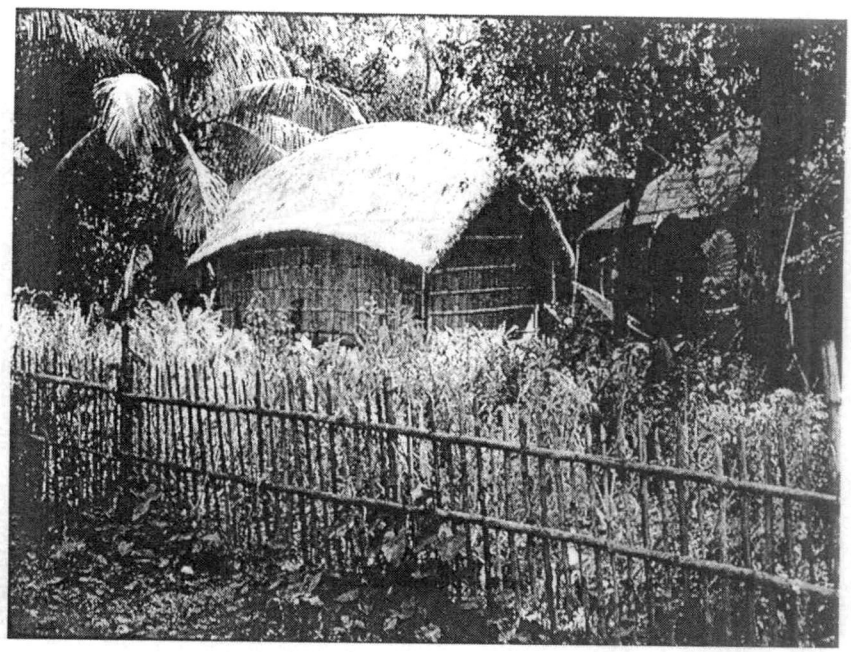

Fig. 10. *Do-chala* hut in a Bengal village

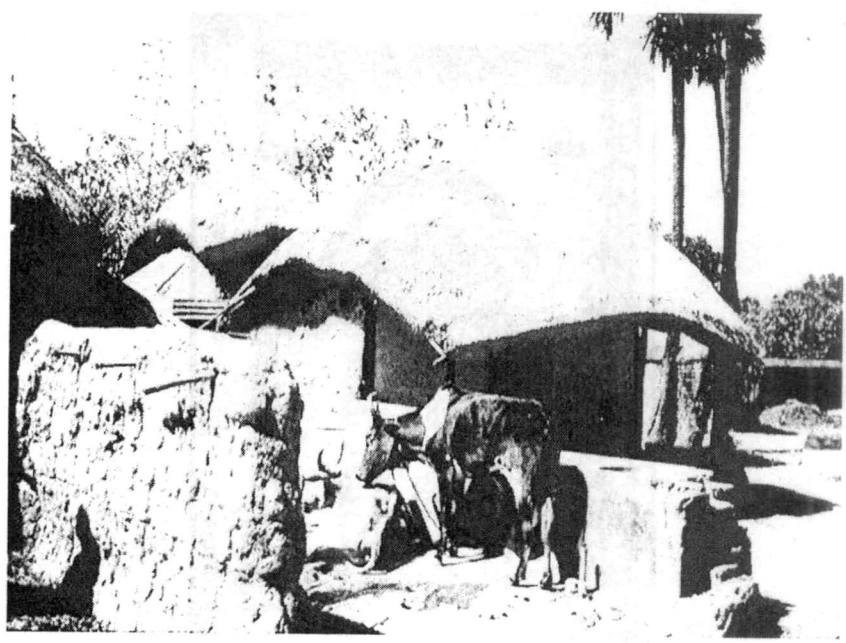

Fig. 11. *Char-chala* hut in a Bengal village

Fig. 12. Sonargaon, Goaldi Mosque

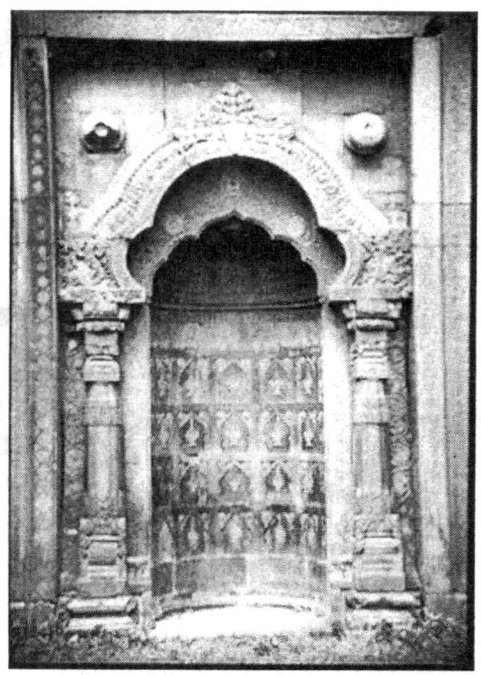

Fig. 13. Pandua, Adina *mihrab*

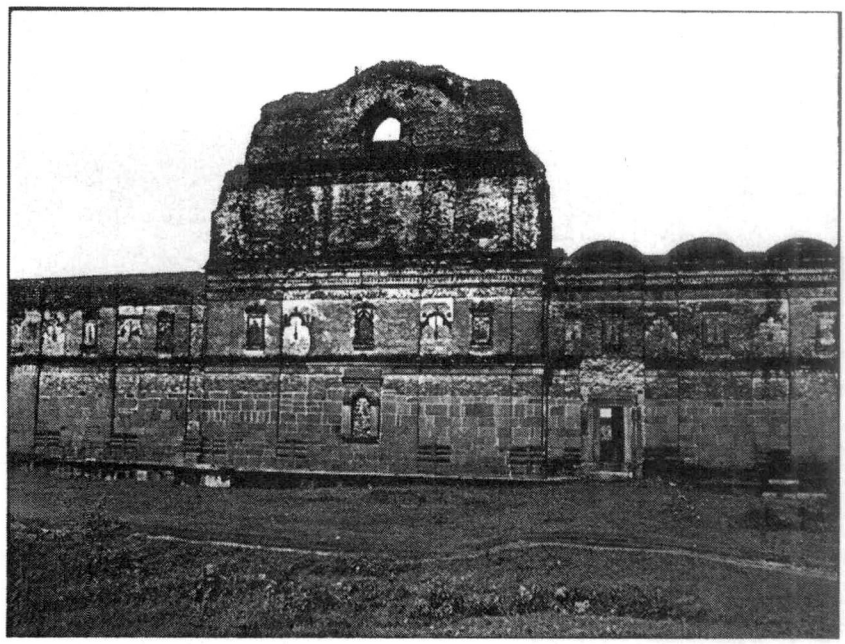

Fig. 14. Pandua, Adina Mosque, exterior west wall

Fig. 17. Ashtogram, Qutb Shah's Mosque

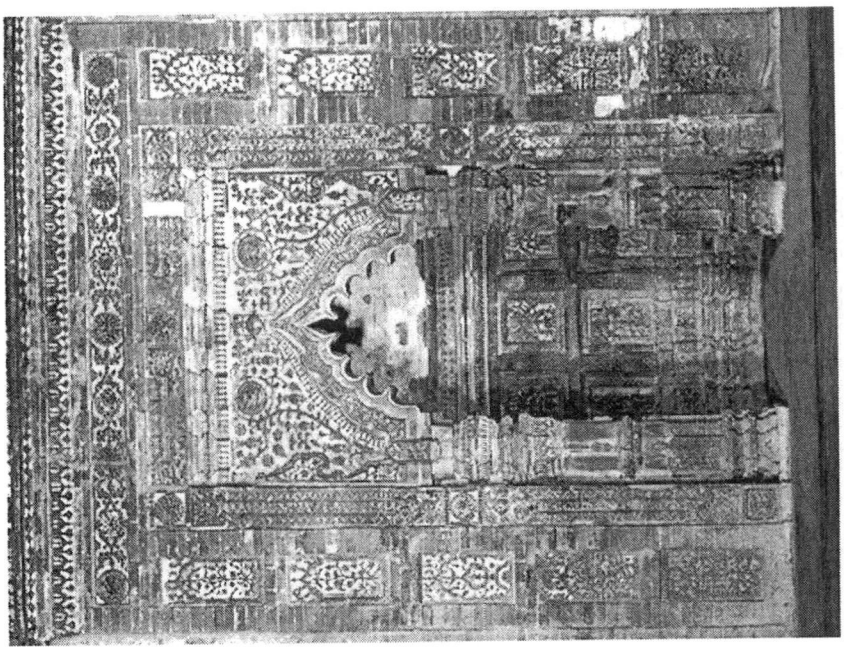

Fig. 15. Bagha Mosque, *mihrab*

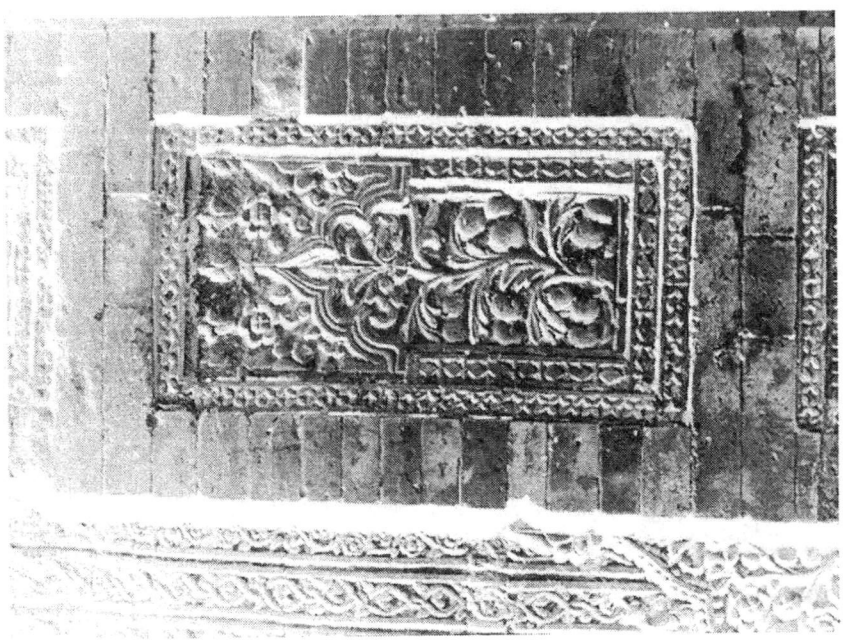

Fig. 16. Bagha Mosque, mango motif in *mihrab* frame

Fig. 18. Kusumba Mosque, *mihrab*

Hydrology and Medieval Technology: A Case Study of The Deccan

SANJAY SUBODH

Medieval society has been taken to be a static society for long. It was considered a period which lacked rational thought and scientific bent of mind. Productions were supposed to be meant for satisfaction of one's carnal needs and technological developments too were a step in that direction only. Though human creations are product of aesthetics and taste, they also reflect the contemporary knowledge which goes into production. Structures of historical age are generally seen as a form of art which reflects the taste of the time. However, like other creations they also carry the knowledge and become an evidence of the erudition of the past. Medieval archaeology[1] takes into account the structures, which are standing on the surface and speak eloquently of the cultural movements and integration through the ages. The study of medieval structures done so far mainly looks into the artistic part of it and the discussion is limited to description of features, raw materials used and establishing the historicity of the structure. The functioning part of the structure is not looked into and it does not essentially become a part of historical understanding.

The advent of the Turks resulted in expansion of urban areas which led to the growth of Building construction activity in Medieval India. The change from trabeate to arcuate method was a result of new cementing technology known as lime mortar. Earlier, only clay mixed with water and straw was used as the binding material but the medieval period saw the introduction of a new mortar in the form of pulverized bricks, lime and water commonly known as *'chuna surkhi'*.[2] It not only resulted in the change in architectural features but was also responsible for diversity of structures, imbibing medieval science and technology in them. Medieval structures which stand on the surface today are of diverse nature. They include palaces, forts, mausoleums, mosques, bridges, *aramgah, kos* minars and *serais* etc. These structures speak eloquently of the cultural movements and integration through the ages.The surviving artefacts are also evidence of past

[1] See R. Nath, 'Medieval Archaeology—Approach and Experiences', *Journal of the Maharaja Sayaji Rao University of Baroda (Humanities Number)*, vol. xxvi (1), 1976-77.

[2] See A. J. Qaisar, *Building Construction in Medieval India*, Delhi, 1988.

technologies and are often termed as 'physical history'. The importance of these artefacts can be gauged from the fact that every era reflects its own distinct style and monuments stand as evidence of the past for future generation of historians. Since long the study of medieval structures has been limited to study of their architectural features and have often been seen as a form of art rather than as representative of contemporary knowledge and technology. It would be difficult to use the word 'science' in the medieval context in the same sense as it is used today.[3] The word technology is derived from the Greek word *'technologia'* meaning systematic treatment of art. The modern usage of the word technology has extended the meaning to all kinds of mechanical devices and forms of practical activity, by which certain material objectives are attained. It includes, but is not confined to, practical applications of theoretical knowledge.[4] However, in case of medieval India we would be looking into the laws of nature known to the people and their application in the sphere of building construction. These laws of nature may not have been science in the exact sense but they were definitely part of the experienced knowledge of the people and were used in different ways. In this paper I would be looking into the system of hydrology functioning in the forts of Golconda and Bidar. Golconda and Bidar are important in the sense that both date to Pre-Mughal period and engage different kinds of technologies to make the system of hydrology work. The paper is based on fieldwork and is important not only from technological point of view but also because it integrates the application of science in building construction and is reflection of 'Organic Architecture' carried out in medieval societies.[5]

Qutb Shahi rulers inherited Golconda fort from the Rajas of Warangal. It was an earthen fort in the beginning and was known as Mangal. It was ceded to Bahmanis by the Rajas of Warangal and fixed as the boundary between two kingdoms. It remained as an important outpost of the Bahmanid

[3] Science is derived from the Latin word *'scientia'* meaning knowledge. It is an enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the world. The scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries marked a new way of studying the natural world, by methodical experimentation aimed at defining 'laws of nature'.

[4] Irfan Habib, *Technology in Medieval India*, Delhi, 2008, Preface, p. ix.

[5] Frank Lloyd Wright introduced the word 'organic' into his philosophy of architecture as early as 1908. It is not a style of imitation, because he did not claim to be building forms which were representatives of nature. Instead, organic architecture is a representation of nature's principles as they had been filtered through the intelligent minds of men and women who could then build forms which are more natural than nature itself. See David Pearson, *New Organic Architecture*, California, 2001.

kingdom till AD 1512 when Quli Qutb Shah, the governor of the fort, declared independence and made it his capital.[6] The fort was strengthened during the reign of Ibrahim Qutb Shah, who rebuilt it extensively with stone and mortar.[7] The fortifications of Golconda were further strengthened in subsequent reigns and so improved that during the long siege of eight months and eight days, Aurangzeb could not conquer the fort except by strategy.[8] The fort still contains the remains of the royal palace, hammams and system of waterworks within its enclosure.[9] The Golconda fort too is located in the north west of the city. For the most part of the period, the fort housed the royalty along with its paraphernalia. Hence, it required a regular supply of water to meet its requirement. Since, the fort was an ancient one, it was renovated during the medieval period and necessary additional structures were constructed for the supply of water to the different parts of the fort. The fort was supplied water from a water body known as Durgam Cheruvu, located amidst the hillocks of what is now known as Jubilee Hills.[10] A Bund was constructed on the lake and earmarked as the main source of water supply to the fort.[11] The water was transported to the fort through the means of channel and the gravitational force with principle of siphoning and application of Boyle's law helped in taking the water to the heights of the fort. It would not be correct to conclude that simply by the gravitational force, water could have been transported to the fort. It needed to be channelized and constant pressure was required to be built in. In this application of Boyle's law was very essential.[12] The water collected in the Durgam Cheruvu was regulated through a sluice.[13] At present, too, there are remains of the mechanism through which sluice gates could be opened or closed. After coming out of Durgam Cheruvu, the water ran through the means of pipe to the fort.[14] Water could not be allowed to run freely in the

[6] Saqi Musta'd Khan, *Maasir-i Alamgiri*, Eng. Tr. by Jadunath Sarkar, New Delhi, 2nd ed., 1986, p. 183.

[7] See Mahomed Kasim Ferishta, *Tarikh-i Ferishta*, Eng. Tr. by John Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, vol. iii, Delhi, 1981 (reprint). (First published in 1829)

[8] See *Maasir-i Alamgiri*, *op. cit.*, pp.182-3.

[9] See S.A.A. Bilgrami, *Landmarks of the Deccan*, New Delhi, 1992 (reprint). (First published in 1927)

[10] See Fig. 1. The natural slopes of a hill always allow rainwater to get deposited in the shallow part, which further helps in recharging of ground water. Durgam Cheruvu is such kind of Catchment Lake. Hyderabad or Deccan is full of this kind of water bodies which act as a lifeline for the society.

[11] See Fig. 2.

[12] Boyle's law describes the inversely proportional relationship between the absolute pressure and the volume.

[13] See Fig. 3.

[14] One can still see the remains of the old pipeline. See Figs 4 and 5.

open field as it would have lost pressure and would not have been in a position to reach the heights of the fort. The water travelled from Durgam Cheruvu to Shaikhpet Nala and from there it entered the Qutb Shahi tomb area and then proceeded towards the fort.[15] The water entered the north-eastern side of the fort[16] where it was collected in a tank[17] and from there it was taken to the rest of the complex through concealed pipes.[18]

Durgam Cheruvu is located at N 17°25.562t, E 78°23.383t and is 552 m above mean sea level.[19] The top of the Bund is at the height of 555 m. From Durgam Cheruvu water entered the Qutb Shahi tomb area and after crossing it, took its way to the fort. The pipeline[20] which stands just outside the tomb complex is at the height of 549 m and the co-ordinates are N 17°23.563t and E 78°23.569t. This pipeline took the water to the north-eastern side of the fort from where it entered into the complex. The fort side from where the water entered stands at the height of 540 m. Water was then collected in a tank which stands at a height of 525 m. The highest point of the tank is 533 m.[21] Hence, the water of the Durgam Cheruvu, running from the height of 552 m had to travel a distance of approximately 10 kms and get deposited in the tank within the fort, which stood at a height of 525 m. For this, the gravitational force alone would not have been able to generate the required pressure. So the pipeline was constructed in such a way that gradually the diameter of it would be decreasing. The gradual decrease in diameter of the pipeline allowed the application of Boyle's law whereby the decrease in the volume of water led to increase in the pressure and thus helped in transporting the water to heights even without the help of modern devices. The structure of the tank and its depth[22] do not allow to conclude that Persian wheel mechanism might have been used to draw water from the tank. Rather

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[15] The space between Durgam Cheruvu and Qutb Shahi tomb complex has given way to modern settlements. Hence, no remains of the pipeline are visible today. However, the pipeline between the tomb and the fort are still extant. See Figs 6-10.

[16] See Fig. 11.

[17] See Figs 11 and 12. Plate 12 shows the channels too in the tank when it was not filled with water before the onset of the monsoon.

[18] See Figs 13 and 14. The remains are in a dilapidated condition and it becomes very difficult to connect them with the original system.

[19] See Fig.15. The author was able to measure the height with the help of GPS instrument (Global Positioning System).

[20] See Figs 8, 9 and 10.

[21] See Fig. 12.

[22] See Fig. 12.

it seems possible that *Saqiya* without gearing[23] was used to draw water. The water then collected[24] was taken to the rest of the fort through the means of channels. As there is no evidence to suggest that Persian wheel was employed to take the water to the next stage, it seems possible that the principle of siphoning was used in transporting water to different parts of the fort.

Bidar flourished as a provincial town during the reigns of the early Bahmani kings and is listed by Ferishta amongst great towns of the Deccan where schools for orphans were established during the reign of Mahmood Shah Bahmani I.[25] Ahmad Shah Bahmani, after a campaign against the Sultan of Malwa in AD 1426, arrived at Bidar on his return from the campaign. He took to the amusement of hunting and coming to a beautiful spot, resolved to found a city to be called Ahmudabad Bidar. A stone citadel of great extent and strength was erected on the site of Bidar.[26] The fort of Bidar was completed in the year AD 1432[27] and the capital city of Bahmanis was also shifted from Gulbarga to Bidar. Bidar continued to be the centre of power till 1619 when the Barid kingdom was absorbed by adil Shahis of Bijapur. Bidar fort, which stands today, has material evidence of both Bahmanis as well as Barid sultans. The construction is of stone using lime mortar and the style is influenced by Iranian and Central Asian patterns.[28]

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[23] In this a wheel with a garland of pots is attached to the surface of the tank. By rotating the wheel with the help of handles attached to it, water is drawn out of the tank and collected on the surface. It employs human labour and does not have gearing system or usage of animal labour like in Persian wheel.

[24] Fig. 16 bears testimony to the fact. Lime coating suggests that it must have been used for the purpose as lime prevents seepage.

[25] Ferishta, *Tarikh-i Ferishta*, Eng. Tr. by John Briggs, *History of the Rise of the Mahomedan Power in India*, vol.ii, p.216. Four vols. Bound in two, Delhi, Reprint 2006.

[26] Ferishta, vol.ii, p. 254.

[27] Ferishta, vol.ii, p. 257.

[28] 'Bidar was made the capital of the Bahmani kingdom in A.D.1429, when nearly a century and a quarter had passed since the establishment of the dynasty in the Deccan. In this fairly long period the traditions and craftsmanship of the Tughluq architecture had been considerably modified by Persian forms and ideals on the one hand, and by the skill of the local masons, who was an adept in the art of carving, on the other. As a result of these influences the architecture of Deccan at this period was relieved of the heaviness of the Tughluq style and developed a certain beauty of outline and elegance of detail'. G. Yazdani, *Bidar: Its History and Monuments*, London, 1944, p. 23. Also see, Bianca Maria Alfieri, *Islamic Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, London, 2000; Mehrdad Shokoohy, 'Sasanian Royal Emblems and their Reemergence in the Fourteenth Century Deccan', *Muqarnas*, vol. 11, 1994; George Michell and Mark Zebrowski, *The New Cambridge History of India: Architecture and Art of the Deccan Sultanates*, Cambridge, 2006(reprint); John Burton Page, *Indian Islamic Architecture: Forms and Typologies, Sites and Monuments*, George Michell (ed.), Leiden, 2008; for reasons for shift to Persian style see, Richard Eaton, 'From Bidar to Timbuktu: View from the Edge of the 15th century Muslim World', *The Medieval History Journal*, vol. 14, no.1, 2011.

Bidar is situated at an altitude of 614 metres above sea level and the co-ordinates are 17°53′60 N and 77°32′60 E. Unlike Gulbarga, Bidar does not have an arid climate and is fed by Manjeera River on the eastern side. It has black cotton soil tract which can store water in the soil for days and weeks. The soil is deep black in colour and the texture varies from loam to clay. The concentration of lime in the soil is high resulting in poor infiltration capacities. It receives normal rainfall and the data collected by the Ministry of Water Resources shows that between the periods of 1901-1970, Bidar received the highest average rainfall of 860 mm per annum, against the average rainfall of 827 mm in the region. The district experiences semi-arid climate with extreme summer. The dust storms and severe heat waves are common in the district between April and May. The temperature begins to rise towards the end of February till May, which is the hottest month of the year. Coldest months are December and January. The temperature varies in the district between 20°C and 42°C.[29] Physiographically, Bidar lies on southern highlands and is popularly called Bidar Plateau. The entire district is underlain by lava flows of the Deccan trap and consists of successive lava flows, almost horizontal in disposition. Individual flows show considerable variation in physical character, thickness, nature and extent of weathering etc. The basaltic lava flows are generally dark, grey, hard and compact. Each lava flows normally consists of two units, lower massive basalt and upper vesicular basalt. Secondary minerals like zeolites, quartz, calcite or some earthy or ferruginous material fill the vesicles. Well-developed columnar joints and spherical weathering are characteristic features of the massive basalt. The massive basalt and vesicular basalt are similar in terms of composition and texture. Deccan Trap basalts represent a thick pile of nearly horizontal layered formation. The porosity and permeability change within an individual flow and also from flow to flow and place to place. The weathered zones, joints and fractures in the massive and vesicular units of basalt form the water bearing horizons. Abundance of vesicles with inter-connecting nature coupled with joints and horizontal partings in the vesicular basalt make it a good aquifer. The red bole bed, occurring as top undulating layer of flow, inhibit movement of ground water, as it is composed of mixture of fragmentary material and clay particles. It, therefore, acts like an aquiclude and its position in the lava sequence indicate presence of permeable water bearing zone underneath. The hydrogeology of Bidar is basaltic in nature. Hence, it does not allow permeation of water at underground level.[30] These geographical features are necessary for the purpose to understand

[29] See *Ground Water Information Booklet: Bidar District, Karnataka*, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India, July 2008.

[30] *Ibid.* pp. 22-3, Figure Three, p. 35.

integration of laws of nature[31] into the technology of building construction undertaken during the medieval times.

Within the fort of Bidar, Tarkash Mahal, Gagan Mahal, Lal Bagh and Rangin Mahal[32] still carry physical evidences of technology of water works, acoustics, cooling system and usage of natural light in highlighting the decorative patterns. All of these enclosures are north facing and inter-connected with each other. However, at present, only Lal Bagh is accessible to visitors and rest of the enclosures is restricted area. Lal Bagh, as the name suggests, is a garden adjacent to the Solah Khamba Mosque and is situated between the palace and the Hamam.[33] Tarkash Mahal is situated right behind the Lal Bagh and is adjacent to the Solah Khamba mosque.[34] Apparently it got its name from one of the Turkish wife of the Bahmani sultans. It is a multi layered structure and has evidence of architectural patterns of Barid sultans too. The enclosure also contains a basement, which is not accessible these days. However, part of it is visible from the front side.[35] Tarkash Mahal was the main edifice where the system of hydrology was based. The basement of the enclosure also functioned as the cooling chamber. Rangin Mahal was originally built by Mahmud Shah Bahmani in AD 1487 and later rebuilt by Ali Barid (AD 1542-80). This enclosure is situated close to Gumbad Darwaza and lies before the entry to the palace area. This structure too is double storied structure with a basement. The basement is practically closed today as it is filled with earth and there is no other means of making a study of it. It has remains of Pipelines as well as cistern and fountain in the courtyard emphasizing operation of hydrology in the structure. However, the existing remains do not get supported with other material evidences, so it's difficult to reconstruct the whole system in operation.

Generally, water architecture in medieval India is associated with the coming of Mughals. However, Bahmanis in the Deccan had made hydrology an integral part of their buildings and Bidar Fort is one example of that. The remains of the fort still carry broken pipelines, water channels, cisterns and fountains all over the palace area. In the records there is a mention of Shahi Hammam, which in the present times functions as the museum of the

[31] I'm referring to the modern principles of science as laws of nature as one is not sure about the theorization of these principles during medieval times.

[32] For a detailed description of the structures, see, G. Yazdani, *op.cit.*

[33] See Fig. 17.

[34] See Fig. 18.

[35] See Fig. 19.

Archaeological Survey of India.[36] Tarkash Mahal seems to be the main space where the operation of waterworks took place. The upper crust of the Bidar Plateau is of laterite and rests on a bed of trap, of much harder texture and less pervious to water.[37] Since, it's a dry climate area, the watershed for recharging the ground water lies in the east where the Manjeera River passes through. Bahmanis made use of *Qanats* to recharge the groundwater and the collected water was supplied to the palace area. *Qanats* are of Persian origin and date back to 500 BC.*Qanat* is an Arabic word meaning subterranean canal or conduit for water. The equivalent term for it in Persian is *Karez*. These were gently sloping subterranean tunnels dug far enough into alluvium or water bearing sedimentary rock to pierce the underground water table and carry it to a desired point. These gravity flow water supply system was suitable for dry areas as it allowed minimal loss of water through evaporation and little risk of pollution. The length of *Qanat* could range from a few hundred yards to tens of miles. In order to have access to the channel, square manholes were dug at closely spaced intervals. These manholes allowed workers to clear the blockade in the channel.[38] Bahmanis made use of this technology in recharging the groundwater in the Bidar fort. A mother well was constructed in front of the Tarkash Mahal and was fed by these underground *Qanats*. This mother well was the main supplier of water to the reservoirs located on the western side of the Tarkash Mahal.[39] Generally,

[36] When Yazdani visited Bidar in 1915, Shahi Hammam had been already converted into government office; first, as the civil court and later on, as the office of Inspector of Schools. On his representation it was handed over to the Archaeological Department. However, changes to the structure had already been made by the people in power then. It was converted into a museum and subsequent preservation works carried out by Archaeological Survey of India were on those lines only. See *Indian Archaeology : A Review*, 1959-60, 1969-70, 1971-72, 1972-73, 1974-75 and 1976-77. Hence, all historical evidences have been lost and there is no possibility of making a study of the system of functioning of the Hamam. Fig. 17 shows the Shahi Hammam facing the Lal Bagh.

[37] See G. Yazdani, *op. cit.* p.1 and Ground Water Information Booklet, *op.cit.*

[38] See George B. Cressey, 'Qanats, Karez and Foggaras', *Geographical Review*, vol. 48, no.1, January 1958; A.K.S. Lambton,'The Qanats of Yazd', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, vol.2, no.1, April, 1992; Yazdani too makes a mention of *karez* in Bidar. See G. Yazdani, *op.cit.*, f.n.3, p. 1; "Qanats were probably first introduced in Bidar during the Bahmani Period by Persian immigrants, and were used in the fort and the city for supplying drinking water and for irrigation", Helen Philon, 'Deccani Gardens and Architectural Landscape in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *South Asian Studies*, vol. 27, no.2, September 2011, p. 158; Dominic J. Davison-Jenkins, *The Irrigation and Water Supply Systems of Vijayanagara*, Delhi, 1997, pp. 86-7. Fig. 20 shows the manholes of the *qanat* inside the fort. Archaeological Survey of India too talk of the underground drain located near Delhi Darwaza. *Indian Archaeology : A Review*, 1961-62. Delhi Darwaza is in the north-east direction of the fort which falls in line with the *qanat*. See G. Yazdani, *op.cit*, p. 31. Manjeera River flowing east of Bidar worked as watershed for recharging groundwater in Bidar fort.

[39] Yazdani too refers it as the main well. There are two more wells located on the north eastern and western side of the palace. See G. Yazdani, *op. cit*, p. 53. Figs 21 and 22 show the reservoirs

brick lining of the well is done in circular shape. However, this particular well was brick lined in square shape.[40] The square brick lining was done probably with a purpose. Area of a circle which is $A = \pi r^2$ is smaller than area of the square which is L x B. Hence, a square well of the same dimensions will have more area than a circular well and in turn will hold more water. This point is pertinent as Bidar's hydrogeology is Basaltic in nature and does not allow permeation of water. Hence, recharging of groundwater through *Qanat* added to the concentration of supply at that point and a square well was helpful in holding more supply. Secondly, after fitting the water lifting mechanism, in a square well, there was more provision of space for worker to go down for cleaning etc.[41] Yazdani is of the opinion that *charas* was operated to draw water from the well. However, this does not seem probable as the depth of the well from the point of collection of water is approximately 100 feet. Hence, the operation of *charas* would require that much space for animals to work on. It was not possible in the present context as the front of the well has garden and rest of the three sides have palace structures and the mosque leaving no open area for the animal to tread on. Therefore, it seems more possible that the *Saqiya,* without pin drum gearing, was used for drawing out water.[42] The collected water was made to flow on the terrace of the Tarkash Mahal and through channels and pipelines were transported to different reservoirs.[43] Law of gravity or principle of siphoning helped in generating desired pressure in the water, which made water travel from one point to another. Thus, the water drawn from the well was distributed to different parts of the fort for their purposes. Lal Bagh, which is in front of Tarkash Mahal got its water from the reservoirs situated on the western side of the palace. Water after coming out of the reservoir through a pipeline fell on the cascade on the wall of the palace and from there with the help of channels and cisterns was distributed to the rest of the garden area.[44] Shahi Hammam was fed by the well located on its western

[40] See Fig. 23.

[41] Fig. 23 also shows the hold which are there in the wall of the well.

[42] For *Saqiya*, see Irfan Habib, *Technology in Medieval India c.650-1750*, 2nd ed., Delhi, 2009, pp. 9-13.

[43] See Figs 24 and 25. In order to draw water from a depth of 100 feet, *Saqiya* needed to have a circular rope of 200 feet in length to be put on it, to which earthen pots were to be attached. In this mechanism, half circle was to have 100 feet rope. Pots attached to this half circle were filled with water and drawn out while other half circle pots were in the process of drowning into water before being drawn out. Hence, at any given point of time 50% of the pots were filled with water while other 50% was empty. If on a rope of 200 feet 60 pots were attached and each pot had a capacity to carry three litres of water, then 60 pots could draw 180 litres of water in one full circle of the wheel. If it took ten minutes to run the wheel in full circle then approximately in an hour 1080 litres of water could be drawn by two people operating the wheel.

[44] Yazdani gives detailed information on the measurements of the channels and cisterns in the Lal Bagh for the purpose. See G. Yazdani, *op.cit*, pp. 52-3. Lal Bagh was restored by the Archaeological Survey of India in its preservation work carried out in the Bidar fort. When Yazdani visited the fort, garden had perished and huts and tiled structures had come up in the garden area. See G. Yazdani, *op.cit*, p. 52; *Indian Archaeology-A Review*, 1971-72.

side. Similarly, Rangin Mahal and other parts of the palace too had system of hydrology working. Since, there is no intact material evidence available, it's difficult to explain the operation of the system in those parts of the fort. *Qanats* were also used to cool a part of the house, which served as summer house for the residents.[45] The basement of the Tarkash Mahal too probably was cooled by the mother well situated adjacent to it and served as the cool chamber of the palace. The air circulating in the underground chamber was cooled by the water in the well as well as water travelling on the roof of the basement. The entry to the basement on the western side also acted as entry point of air inside the basement. However, the air was not allowed to enter in a free and unrestricted manner. Rather, the entry made less volume of air to enter inside which brought combined Gas Laws in operation. By which, decrease in volume led to increase in pressure which led to reduction in temperature. The cooler air which is heavier displaced the light hot air and the light hot air was allowed to escape through niches near the ceiling.[46] This allowed circulation of cool air inside and made the interior cool by simple application of laws of nature in the method of building construction.

The indigenous technology used in the building construction speaks of the acquaintance of man with the laws of nature and the integration of the knowledge in the technology of building construction. However, it is difficult to tell whether these were part of codified knowledge of the society or not. Nevertheless, one can confidently conclude that these were definitely part of the experienced knowledge of the society and were put into use in different aspects of life. The contemporary sources also do not provide with much evidence about the planning and process of building construction and one is primarily dependent on the field work alone to reconstruct the knowledge of that time. These structures stand as physical evidence of the past and have the potential to satisfy all kinds of interest, be it that of researcher, artist or a tourist. It is up to us what kind of dialogue we want to have with our historical structures.

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[45] See George B. Cressey, *op.cit*, p. 29.

[46] See Fig.19. Since the basement is not accessible, it is not possible to explain the system in detail. For similar kind of cooling mechanism, See Sanjay Subodh, 'Air Dynamics and Building Construction in Medieval India: A Case Study of Sheesh Mahal at Farrukh Nagar', in R. L. Hangloo (ed.), *History of Science and Technology*, Delhi, 2011. The problem of ventilating inner and underground chambers with the help of flues and chimneys was not unknown to the architects of Middle East and India. See, K.N. Chaudhuri, *Asia Before Europe: Economy and Civilisation of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 204.

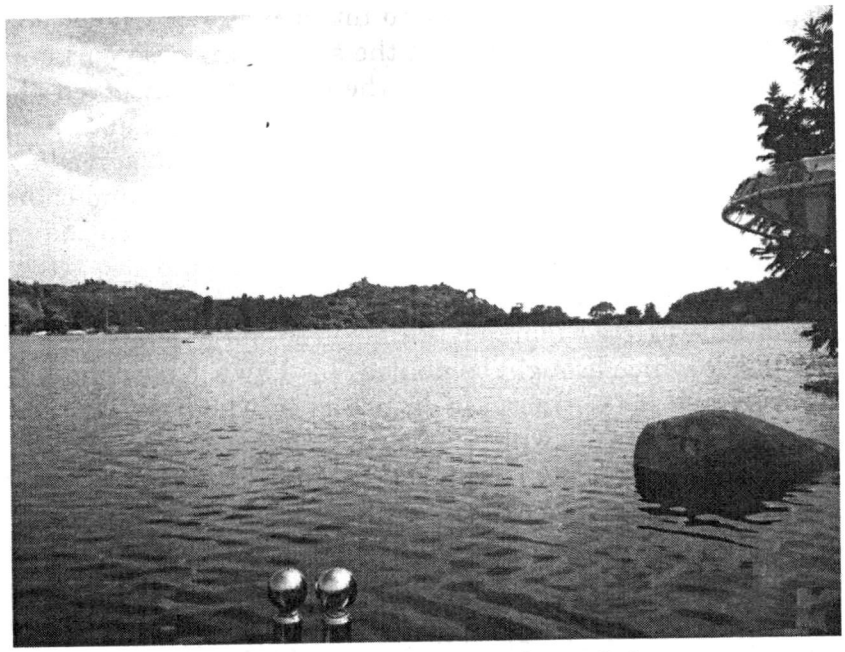

Fig. 1. Durgam Cheruvu Catchment Lake

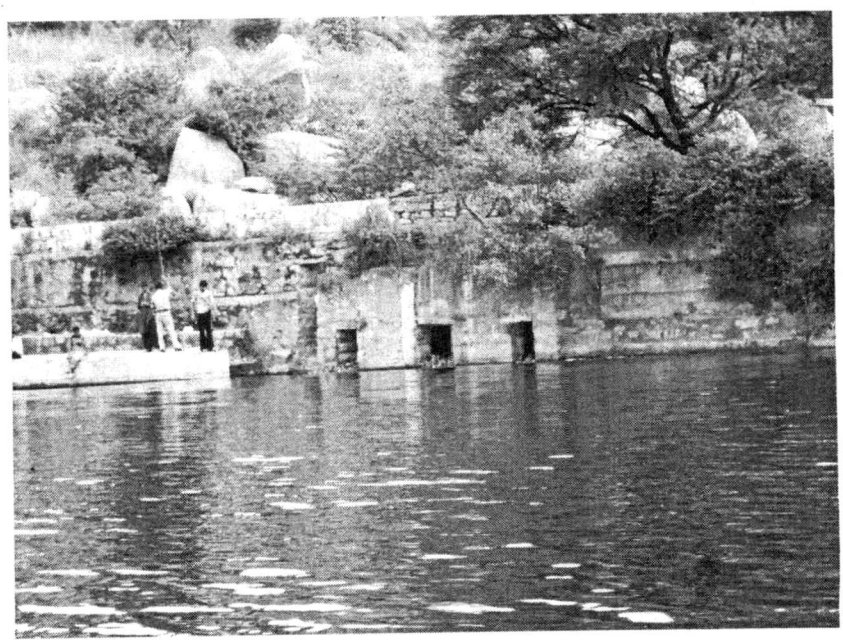

Fig. 2. A Bund constructed on Durgam Cheruvu Lake

Fig. 3. Remains of a sluice gate to regulate water in Durgam Cheruvu Lake

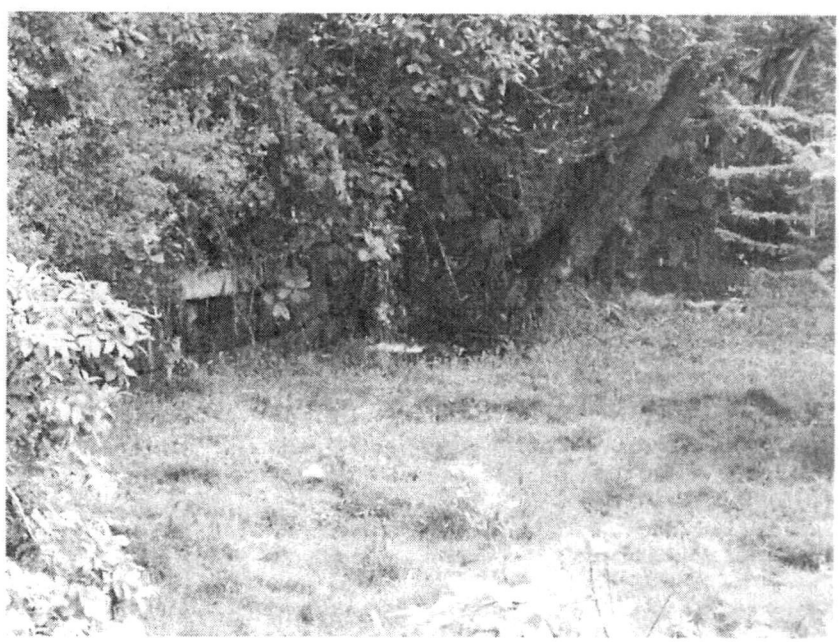

Fig. 4. Remains of pipelines connected with Durgam Cheruvu Lake

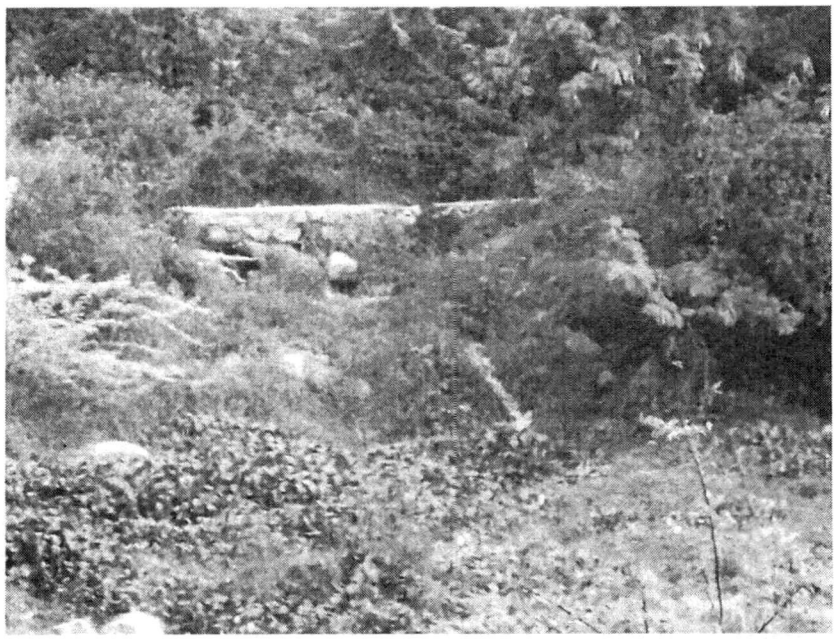

Fig. 5. Remains of pipelines connected with Durgam Cheruvu Lake

Fig. 6. Remains of channel for pipeline between
Qutb Shahi tomb area and the fort

Fig. 7. Remains of pipeline between Qutb Shahi tomb complex area and the fort

Fig. 8. Remains of pipeline visible between tomb complex and fort area by the side of modern settlement

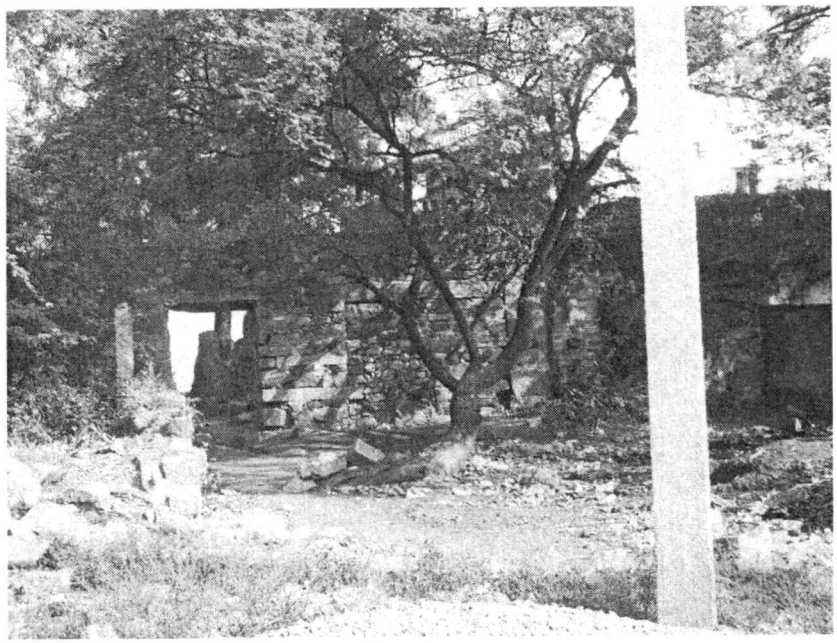

Fig. 9. Remains of pipeline through modern settlement between tomb complex and fort area

Fig. 10. Remains of pipeline through modern settlement between tomb complex and fort area

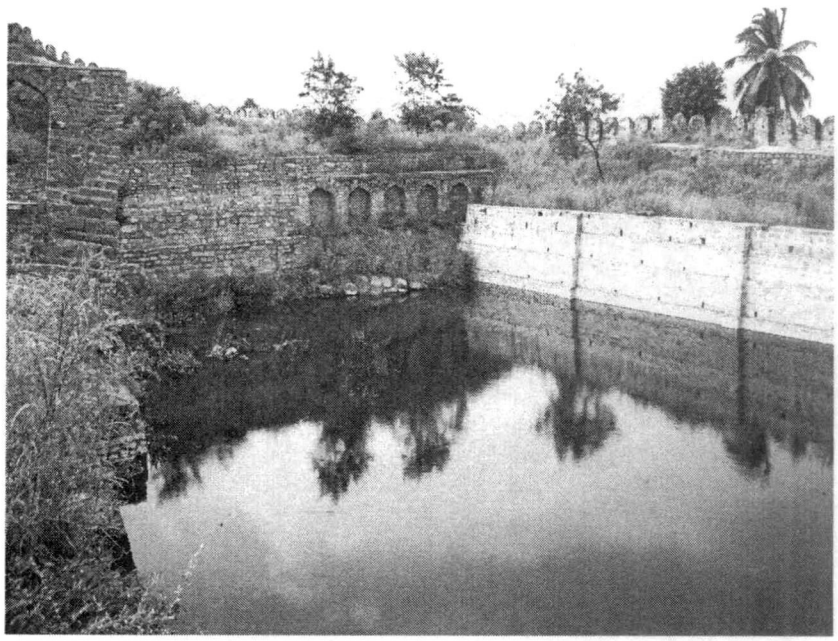

Fig. 11. A tank in the north-eastern side of the fort where water was collected

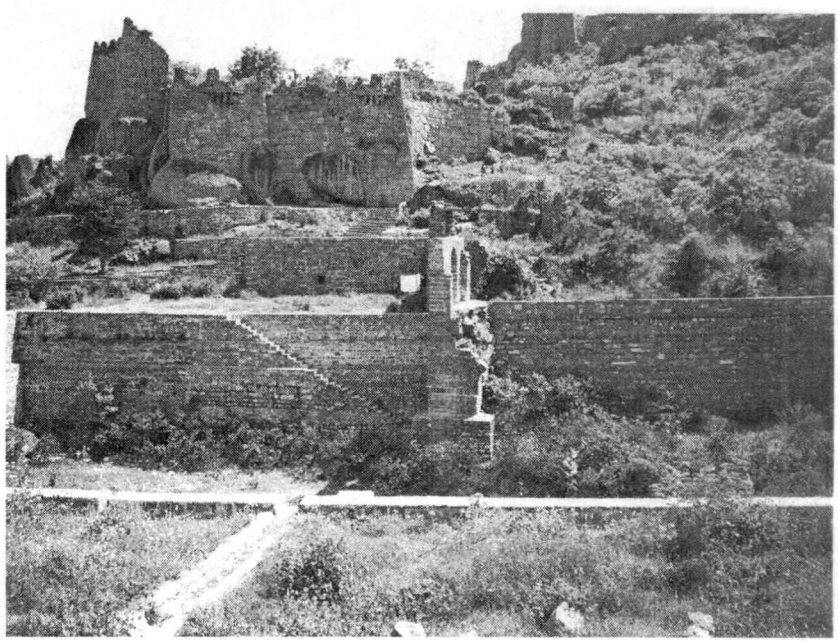

Fig. 12. Remains of the channels in the tank for carrying water to the rest of the complex before onset of the monsoon

Fig. 13. Traces of dilapidated concealed pipelines

Fig. 14. Remains of concealed pipeline on the floor in dilapidated condition

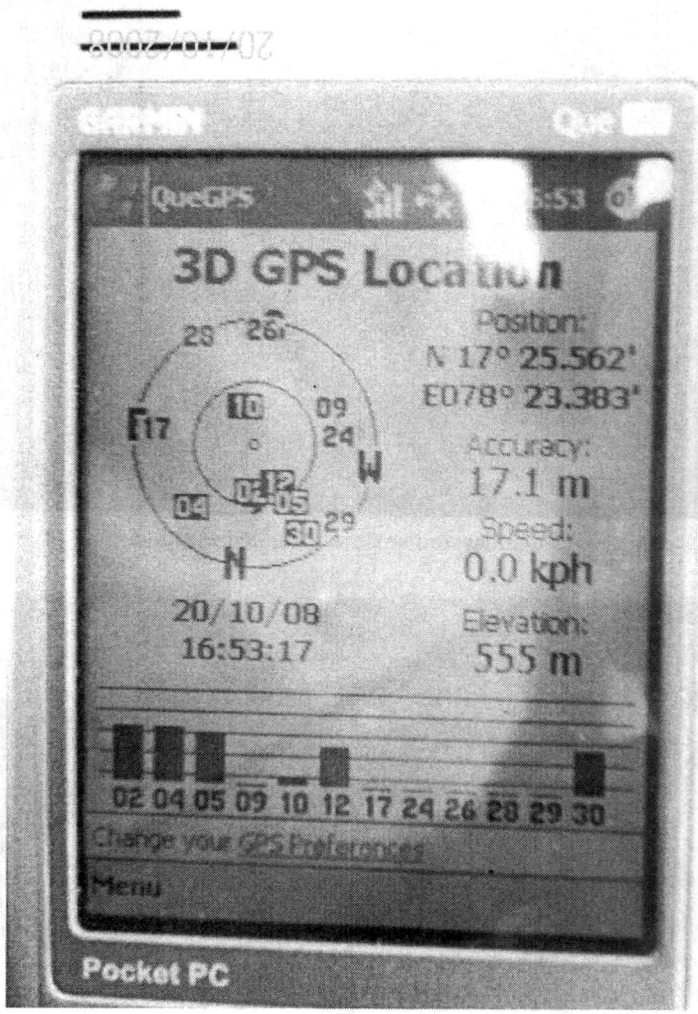

Fig. 15. 3D GPS reading showing position and height (from mean sea level) of Durgam Cheruvu Lake

Fig. 16. Line plastered surface attached to the tank

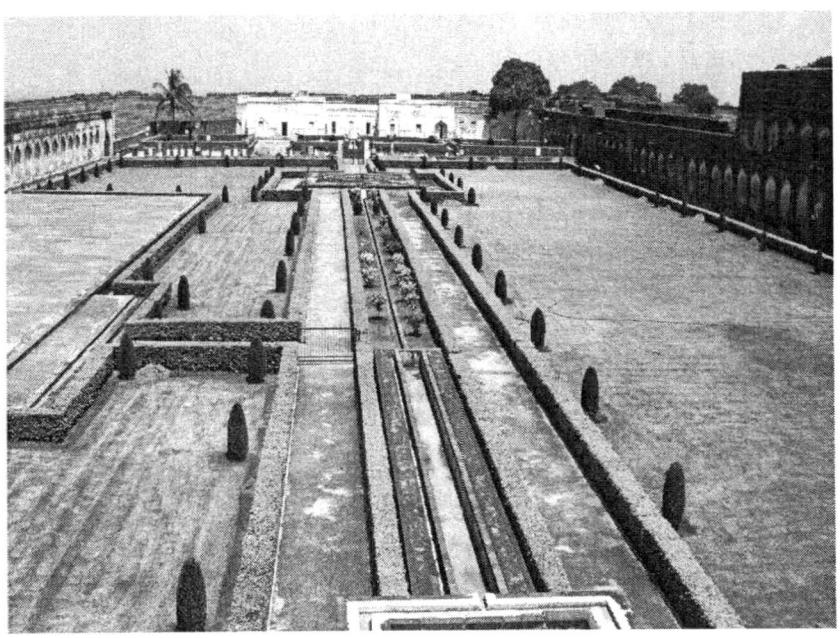

Fig. 17. Lal Bagh, situated between the Palace and the Hamman adjacent to Solah Khamba Mosque, Bidar

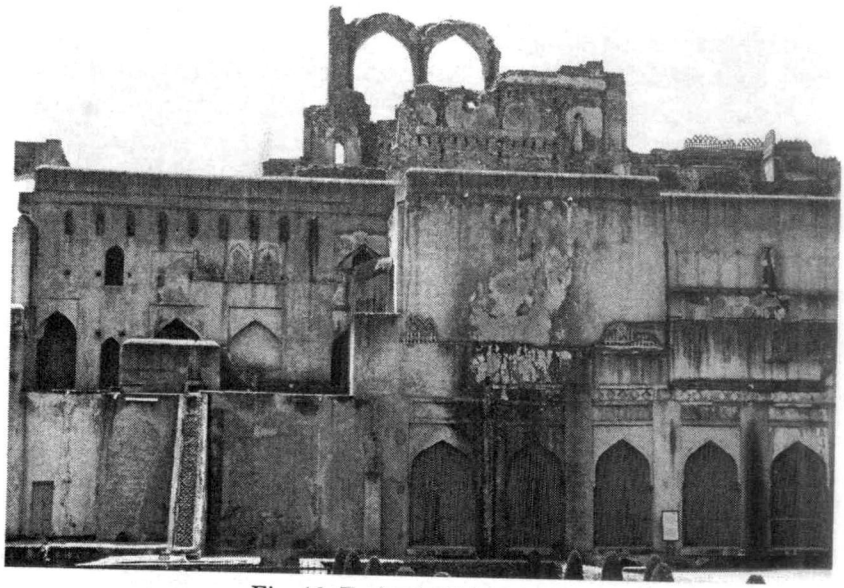

Fig. 18. Tarkash Mahal, Bidar

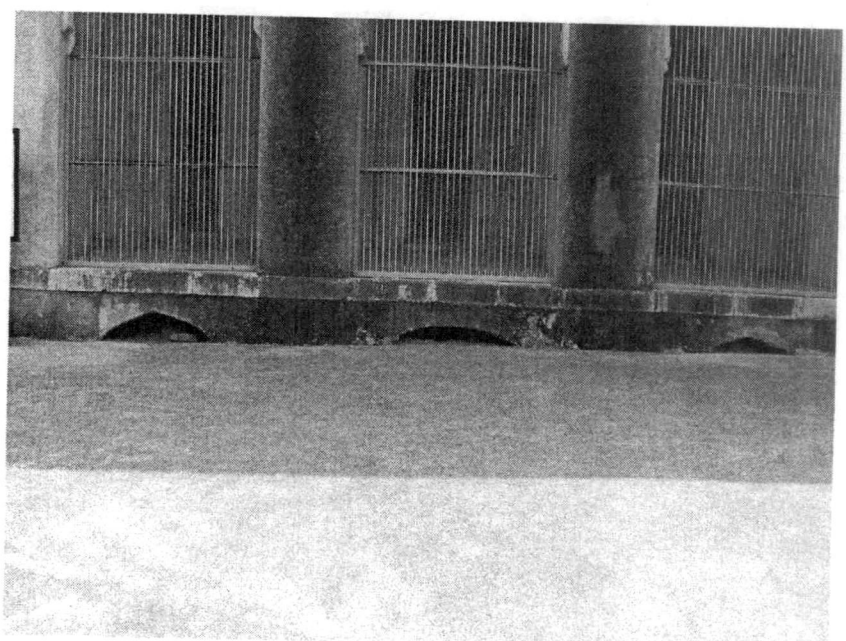

Fig. 19. Basement of Tarkash Mahal visible through arches, Bidar

Fig. 20. Manholes of the Qanat inside the fort, Bidar

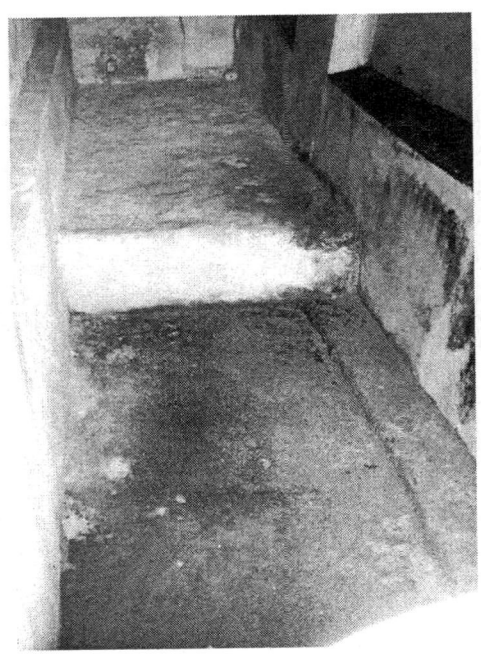

Fig. 21. Reservoir located on the western side of the Tarkash Mahal

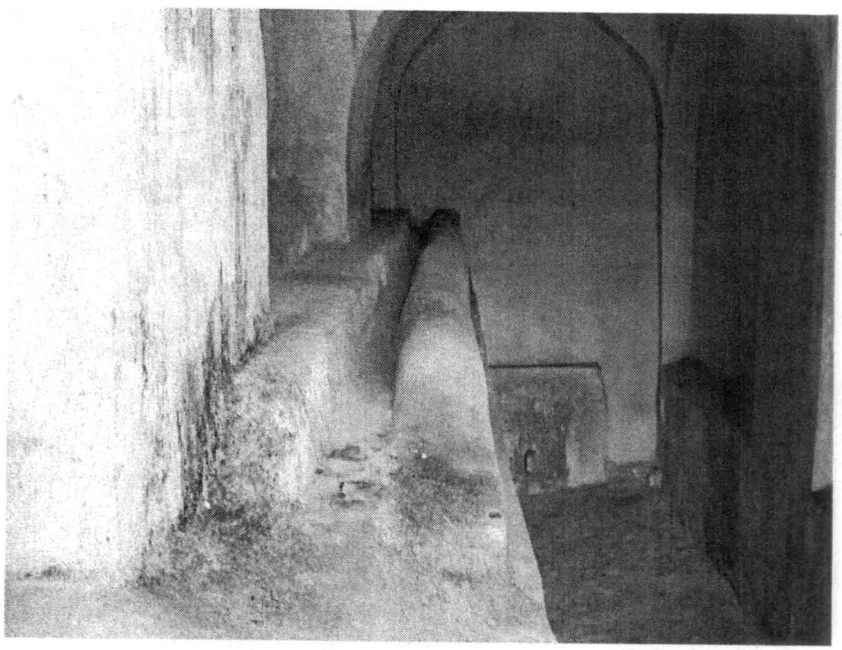

Fig. 22. Another reservoir on the western side of the Tarkash Mahal

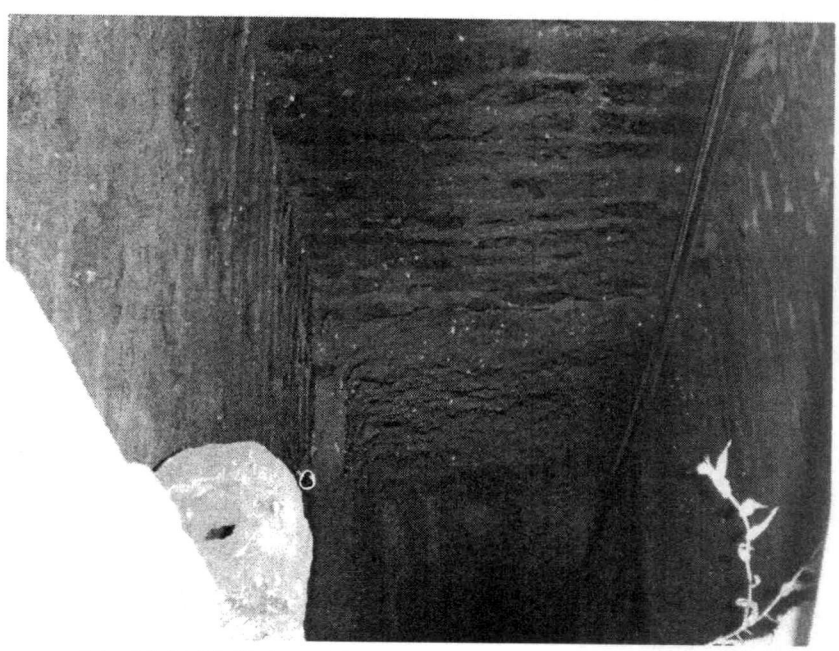

Fig. 23. Brick lining of the well in square shape and the hold fixed on the wall of the well

Fig. 24. Channels and pipelines in the Tarkash Mahal through which water were transported to different reservoirs

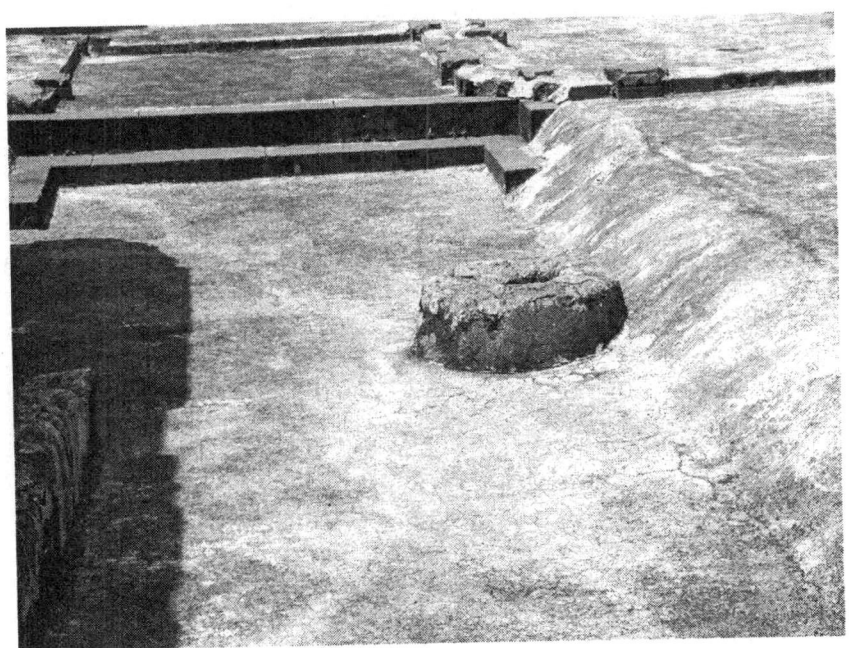

Fig. 25. Channels at the terrace of Tarkash Mahal through which water were transported from Saqiya

EPIGRAPHY AND WRITTEN SOURCE

Epigraphs of Medieval Bengal: Mode of Decipherment and Utilization for History-writing

A. K. M. YAQUB ALI

Introduction

The study of medieval Bengal especially of the Sultanate Period (AD 1204-1576) in her multi-dimensional aspects depends greatly on the coin-legends and epigraphic derivatives due to the paucity of contemporary chronicles and archival records.[1] Hence the history-writing of medieval Bengal in the forties of the last century was more hypothetic than realistic depending on the folk-tales, ballads, local tradition, hagiological literature and such other sources whose veracity could scarcely be tested. But from the fifties of the last century till the recent time, archaeological investigations brought to light such tools that facilitated the history-writing of medieval Bengal systematically and to a greater depth. The valuable treasures traced in the coins and epigraphs have accelerated the research on Bengal Sultanate period and induced the scholars to exert their efforts for the reconstruction of some unresolved facts of history. The epigraphs of both secular and religious monuments of the period beginning from the early thirteenth century to last quarter of the sixteenth century have contained valuable information which could scarcely be traced in the contemporary and near-contemporary written records.[2]

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[1] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, "Five Epigraphs of Pre-Mughal Bengal: A Study of their Contents and Calligraphic Styles", *Islamic Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1986, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, pp. 371-85. For extensive study: A. H Dani, *Bibliography of Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1957 (henceforth be referred to as *Bibliography)*; Shamsuddin Ahmed, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, vol. iv, Varendra Research Museum, 1960 (henceforth the source be referred to as *IB*); A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, *The Select Arabic and Persian Epigraphs*, Dhaka, Islamic Foundation, 1988(henceforth be referred to as *SAPE*); Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1992 (henceforth the source be referred to as *Corpus*).

[2] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, "Epigraphs of Bengal Sultanate: A Search for the elements of Historical Interest", *Journal of Bengal Art* (henceforth *JBA*), vol. 6, 2001, The International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, Dhaka, p. 171.

Keeping consistency with the theme of the subject, a few words are to be said about the terminologies of 'epigraphy' or 'epigraph' and 'inscription'. Both the terms in aesthetic art are usually applied to incise letters on stone-slabs inserted on the monuments referring to some events of building activity which are of historical importance. But inscription is applied to all sorts of stone-carving, without calligraphic styles or with calligraphic style while the epigraph is closely related to the recognized calligraphic *khatt*. The scholars on this topic have used both the terms without any discrimination. The writing or carving on stone is not like simple writing used in daily affairs, rather the expansion or contraction of letter-shafts, the vertical strokes and horizontal curves create a sort of beautiful stone-carving which is called epigraphy, and on which it is incised, in totality, is called epigraph.[3] An expert on this field of study is called an epigraphist.

The Arabic alphabets in their elongated shafts and niche-like curvatures are conducive to produce elegant writing on any material, hard or soft; and this facility is absent in case of the alphabets of other languages. Hence both calligraphy and epigraphy are the speciality of Muslim aesthetic artists. Arabic is mostly the language of the epigraphs of Bengal Sultanate although a few epigraphs are found in bilingual i.e. in Arabic and Persian. Hence one who wishes to get specialization in the decipherment must acquire proficiency in both the languages.

A few points are discussed for history-writing of medieval Bengal as traced in the select epigraphs under the following heads:

1. Urban sites and area names;
2. Ecological upkeep and benevolent works of rulers and other personalities;
3. Scepter-insignia and eulogical titles of the Sultans;
4. Epigraphy and aesthetic aspects.

This paper on proper investigation of the thematic points aims at making new additions to and enhancing the intrinsic merit of history-writing of medieval Bengal.

Subject Outline

Historiography from etymological stand-point simply means history-writing; but in its wider connotation it encompasses a wide range of works starting from the collection of diverse materials, the blowing out the chaffs from the

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[3] *JBA*, vols. 9 & 10, 2004-2005, pp 89 *ff*

kernel to synchronization and tabulation of the well-proved but multi-dimensional materials which at last terminate in writing. The whole well-knit process taken together may justifiably be termed historiography. Once the concept of historiography regarding past used to revolve around editing and reading of chronicles, contemporary written materials and archival records with little importance given to the archaeological artefacts. But to study the human nature and activity in the society of the past, no scholar of the present would get back to utilize the archaeological sources like the coins, the epigraphs and such other artefacts to suit the subject of his study. Pertinently it is to be mentioned here that the epigraphy of medieval Bengal, so far discovered and deciphered, if utilized properly, could play pivotal role in the history-writing of the period mentioned above. To get a clear understanding of the subject a few cases are delineated below with the citation of the sources deemed proper. First, let me start with the initial part of the paper i.e., mode of decipherment.

The decipherment of any intricate and complicated writing is not an easy task. In case of calligraphic writing it is more difficult and time-consuming. Such is the case for the decipherment of the epigraphs of Bengal Sultanate. In point of decipherment the epigraphs can be treated under two broad heads *viz.* the simple epigraphs and complicated epigraphs. Both types of epigraphs follow the styles of Arabic writing like *Naskh, Thulth, Muhaqqaq, Raihan, Tauqi* and *Riqa* with the minor styles of *Bihar* and *Ghubar.*[4] *Tughra* is not an independent style of Arabic writing; rather it is an ornamental form of writing applicable to all the major and minor styles of calligraphic writing. The decipherment of this ornamental form is a stupendous task, and at the same time it is tormenting to an expert epigraphist also. To decipher an epigraph, either simple or intricate, there is no set rules. It depends on the skill and intellect of the person specialized in the subject having command on the language concerned. It is more of sustained efforts and observations than mere theoretical knowledge. And at the same time it demands more patience to be devoted for days together. However, as my experience goes, a few directions could still be followed for decipherment.

In case of simple type of epigraphs, an expert can decipher the text without much toil and brain work. The text of the epigraph is engraved on the stone-slab in a simple and systematic way. The main theme of the text is

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[4] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, *Aspects of Society and Culture of the Varendra, 1200-1576 A.D.*, Rajshahi, 1998 (henceforth the source be referred to as *ASCV)*

normally engraved in symmetrical order without breaking the sequence beneath the elongated shafts of the Arabic alphabets الف *Alif* and لام/ *Lam*.[5] In that case an expert can cast his eyes on each and every word till the last one and on deciphering them all, if satisfied, can write on the paper and try to find out the proper meaning along with its implication. Yet in case of a simple epigraph, an expert even needs to spend much time and several attempts to come to the full decipherment.

In case of complicated and ornamental variety of epigraphs, nothing could definitely be chalked out for the decipherment; rather it depends solely on the sagacity and insight of the decipherer. In such epigraphs the words, to make the sentence, are not symmetrically arranged maintaining the sequence; rather in the whole body of the text, to create various ornamental designs, the words are haphazardly put upward, downward and in the left and right so that it vibrates sonorous effects in the minds of the onlookers.[6] To decipher such type of epigraph which may usually be termed *Tughra* is very difficult, and the expert has to ponder over time and time again for its decipherment. The decipherer will have to apply his own skill and technique to makeout the theme of the text after full decipherment, adequate and meaningful.

Now let us see the second part of the paper i.e. utilization of the deciphered materials for history-writing. This could be discussed under the following heads.

Urban Sites and Area Names

The names of capital cities and mint-towns can be traced in the written materials and on the coins under Bengal Sultanate. Besides these urban sites, some place and area names could be traced in the epigraphs, the identification of which would come to the use of history-writing of the Bengal Sultanate. An example is cited here. Navagram Inscription of Nasır al-Din Mahmud Shah (AD 1437-59) dated 858 AH / AD 1454 (Fig. 1) refers to Simlabad in the following words فى خطة رفيعة موسومة بسملاباد (in the high tract of land delineated as Simlabad).[7] The provenance of inscription, Navagram, is

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[5] *JBA*, vols 9 & 10, p. 92; A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, "Two Unpublished Arabic Inscriptions", *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum* (*JVRM*), vol. 6, University of Rajshahi, 1980-81, p. 106 ; *SAPE*, pp. 6-7

[6] Zafar Hasan, 'Muslim Calligraphy', *Indian Art and Letters*, vol. IX, London, 1935, p. 61.

[7] *JVRM*, vol. 16, pp. 101 *ff*, *ASCV*, pp. 371-3.

situated in the Tarash Police Station of greater Pabna district. Considering its find-place, we would like to mention that the tract of land comprising some portions of northern Pabna, south western Bogra and south eastern Rajshahi may have probably been named as Simlabad. The content of the text of the epigraph also testifies this contention. First, the word خطة *khittah* occurring in the inscription is supposed to denote an administrative unit like terms *iqlim* and *arsah*. Generally the term *khittah* is applied to a town fortified with ramparts and walls, whereas *qasbah* means a town which is thus not protected. But here in this inscription the word رفيعة *rafia* (high) is added to the خطة *khittah*. Hence it may be presumed that this *khittah* خطة indicates a vast tract of land known as Simlabad which possibly included the town or fort enclosed by ramparts or massive walls. Secondly, the word رفيعة rafia (high alluvial land) which is an adjective has been added to the خطة *khittah*. The land, thus defined as high and alluvial, may be applied to the south eastern part of the Barind (Varendra) plateau.[8] The extensive tract watered by Padma on the south, the Ganges-Mahananda on the west and Karatoya on the east (on the northern side was probably Tarai and Duars Jungle) is called *Barind* or *Varendri*.[9] Paduvana, probably a corruption of Pabna, though not entirely, but a part of it, falls within the territory of the Varendra. In the Madhainagar Copperplate the land granted to the donee is included in the Varendra within the Pundravardhana bhukti.[10] On the strength of these evidences it may be assumed that a large tract of land to the north of the find-spot (Navagram) under study was called Simlabad. Further the Inscription contains some politico-social issues of the fifteenth century Bengal Sultanate that would be more useful for history-writing of the time in question. From the content of the inscription it is learnt that under the Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah the *wazir wa sar-i-lashkar* (administrative-military chief) of this خط *khittah* or administrative zone was Ulugh Rahim Khan.[11]

Tribeni Inscription of Sultan Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah (AD 1459-1474) dated AH 860/AD 1455[12] mentions Sajla Mankabad as '*arsah*' and Labala as town. Sajla Mankabad has been identified with an area corresponding to the tract lying between Hooghly and Saraswati, extending to the bank of the Kapataksha, and as including at present the whole 24-Parganas, the western

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[8] *JBA*, vol. 6, p. 174.
[9] *ASCV*, pp. 7-8.
[10] N.G Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, vol. iii, Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi,1929, pp. 106, 108, 115; *JASB*, New series, vol. 6, p. 476.
[11] *JVRM*, vol. 6, p. 105.
[12] S. Ahmed, *IB*, p. 69.

part of Nadia and south western part of Murshidabad district. Labala is surmised to be situated in the Hooghly district. Thus it covered the Satgaon area under Bengal Sultanate.[13]

Dinajpur Inscription of Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah dated AH 865/AD 1460[14] has contained in itself two urban sites namely 'Jur' and 'Barur' over which *Sar-i-Lashkar wa Wazir* Ulugh Iqrar Khan had the absolute power of administration. 'Barur' has been identified with a Pargana of that name in Purnia district of Bihar outside the western border of Dinajpur. As regards the construction of the mosque and the repair of tomb mentioned under study be taken for the mosque of Gopalganj and the tomb of *Chihl Ghazi,* five miles away to the north of Dinajpur town and thus the location of the site 'Jur' may be surmised around it. Therefore, the sites 'Jur' and 'Barur' spread over an extensive tract of land stretching from Dinajpur in the east to Purnia in the west.[15] In the Deotala Inscription of Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah dated AH 868/ AD 1464,[16] the mention of قصبه *Qasbah* Tabrizabad in honor of the eminent sage Shaykh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi reminds us of the urban-site Deotala situated 15 miles north of the Sultanate capital Pandua known as Hazrat Pandua and 1/2 miles south of the northern boundary of Malda district.[17] Another Epigraph of the same Sultan wherein قصبه*Qasbah* Tabrizabad is mentioned as Deotala supports this contention.[18] In view of the discussion cited above we may arrive at the proposition that the epigraphs, on proper decipherment and identification of urban sites and area names, serve as silent tools to update the history-writing of Sultanate Bengal where contemporary written materials have no access at all.

Ecological Upkeep and Benevolent Works of the Rulers and other Personalities

The rulers of a country, their deputies and officials holding various key posts of administration have their sacred duty to keep ecology in good condition and to accomplish benevolent works for the people so that they could lead a moderate life. But in all cases and times such picture could not be noticed. During Bengal Sultanate period we have the picture in positive from the epigraphic evidence. Ecology sustains to run the human species, the animals

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[13] *JBA*, vol. 6, p. 174
[14] S. Ahmed, *IB*, pp. 72-3.
[15] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, *ASCV*, pp. 300-1
[16] S. Ahmed, *IB*, pp. 78-9.
[17] *Ibid*, p. 77.
[18] *Ibid*, p. 81.

and other living objects in growing condition and normal way. On the other hand ecological improvement depends greatly on the unobstructed flow of water in any form it could be managed. The water-supply in any form to all living beings is expressed by the Arabic terminology 'سقاية *siqayah*'.[19] It has got its reference in the Quranic verse[20] where its utility is acknowledged along with other virtuous deeds. There is no denying the fact that water is the life-blood of all creations. This notion is echoed in the holy Quran where it is stated that 'We (Allah) created everything with life from water'.[21] To offer water to drink is praiseworthy and is indeed virtuous deed of human beings. The Prophet (sm) of Islam in many of his sayings gave good tidings of salvation in the world hereafter for those who give to drink water for the thirsty even it is an animal or a plant. Being imbibed with this spirit of Islamic idealism the votaries of Islam and the followers of Prophet Muhammad (sm) in all times take the initiative in making waters available for the use of human species and other creations of the Universe and for keeping the ecological balance in the places deemed necessary. Like other Muslim rulers of the world in medieval times, the Bengal Sultans also took positive steps in this direction. Pertinently it is to be mentioned here that till now we have ten epigraphs of Bengal Sultanate so far deciphered, in which سقاية *siqayah* or water arrangement is spoken of regarding the area concerned. For example one of these epigraphs procured from the Gaur area of Bangladesh and preserved in the archaeological Museum of Paharpur is produced here with text and translation (Fig. 2). It is divided into two lines.[22]

Text

1st Line:

قال الله تعالى من جاء بالحسنة فله عشر امثالها بنى هذه السقاية فى عهد السلطان المعظم والمكرم علاء الدنيا والدين ابو المظفر حسين شاه

2nd Line:

السلطان ابن سيد اشرف الحسينى خلد الله ملكه وسلطانه بانيه خان المعظم والمكرم سعديخان فى التاريخ سنة سبع عشر وتسعماية

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[19] A K. M. Yaqub Ali, 'Two Stone Inscriptions of Paharpur Museum: A Study of their Contents and Calligraphic Art', *Pratnatattva* (Journal of the Department of Archaeology), Jahangirnagar University, Savar, vol. 13, June 2007, pp. 2 *ff.*

[20] Al-Quran, 9:19.

[21] Al-Quran, 23:30.

[22] The epigraph in question is deciphered by the writer and published in the *Pratnatattva*.

Translation

1st Line: Allah, the Great, said "He who does good shall have ten times as much to his credit. This water reservoir was built in the time of the honoured and benevolent Sultan 'Ala al- Dunya wa al-Din Abul Muzaffar Husayn Shah.

2nd Line: the Sultan, son of Sayyid Ashraf al Husaini, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sultanate. The builder of the water-course is honoured and respected Khan Sadi Khan by name in the date, the year being AH 917/AD 1511.

Of the ten water reservoirs or tank(سقاية) mentioned above, one belongs to the reign of Sultan Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah of the date AH 871/AD 1466, seven to the reign of 'Ala al-Din Husayn Shah bearing the dates AH 910/AD 1504-5, AH 916/AD 1510 (three in number), AH 917/AD 1511, AH 921/AD 1515 and AH 922/ AD 1516, respectively. Two such inscriptions belong to the reign of Sultan Nasir al-Din Nusrat Shah dated AH 929/AD 1522 and AH 938/AD 1531-2 respectively.[23] Pertinently it is to be pointed here that the term *siqayah* is used directly in all the epigraphs with the exception of two, one belonging to the reign of Sultan Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah dated AH 871/AD 1466 and the other to that of Sultan Nasir al-Din Nusrat Shah dated AH 929/AD 1522. In the former the word *nahr*, the meaning of which is river, is used while in the latter, the term *Bayt al-siqayah* or the house of drinking water is mentioned. Except these two epigraphs all the inscriptions mentioned above start with the Quranic verse, 'He who does good shall have ten times as much to his credit'.[24] This verse of the Holy Quran clearly indicates that good word or deed has its reward ten times, and the *siqayah* is included in such virtuous work which will be rewarded ten times for the undertakers. The *siqayah* traced in the epigraphs mentioned above can be taken, in the broader perspective, for any type of water-course, be it a reservoir, tank, canal, *dighi*, artificial lake and such other devices for water-reservation. On the basis of the evidence of these few epigraphs of Bengal Sultanate, we can reasonably presume that water management throughout the territorial expanse of medieval Bengal was adequately done by the scepter and the philanthropist to keep the ecology uncontaminated and at the same time conducive to the health and habitation[25] of men and other living creatures of the country. Legend says that during the reign of Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah (AD 1437-59), Ulugh Khan Jahan, a saint-General came

[23] S. Ahmed, *IB*, pp 85 ff ; *Ibid*, pp. 167, 185 *ff*., pp. 194, 209, 232.
[24] *Pratnatattva*, p. 3.
[25] S. Ahmed, *IB*, pp. 64-7.

with more than three hundred companions to the south Bengal, in dense jungle of Sundarban area, reclaimed it and made it suitable for human habitation. Khalifatabad, identified with Bagerhat area of modern Bangladesh was made capital of this region. It also served as mint-town for several Bengal Sultans. Tradition goes that Ulugh Khan Jahan, his companions and successive hierarchical personages built three hundred mosques and the same number of water-courses over this area. The extant Sath-Gumbuz mosque at Bagerhat and the epigraph in the tomb of Khan Jahan substantiate the occasion.[26] It is interesting to note that the noble women also did not lag behind in such venture of *siqayah* arrangement. The name of 'Bowa Malti' as a sponsor of a *siqayah* traced in the Chalisapara (Old Maldah) epigraph of the time of Nasir al-Din Nusrat Shah (AD 1519-32) dated AH 938/AD 1532 is case in point.[27] Even today, several dug-out tanks and other types of water reservoirs as remnants bear witness to their glorious past.

Related to this important aspect of سقاية *siqayah* or water-supply, a few cases of benevolent works could be traced in the epigraphs which would contribute a lot to the history-writing of medieval Bengal. Communication in all ages is an important factor for human habitation on the earth. It varies from time to time and from place to place. Medieval Bengal is not an exception. Both the land and water routes could be used by the people of the time in Bengal as traced in the epigraphic source. Bengal being a riverine land, much stress was given to water communication during the period of Bengal Sultanate. The terms like *'Mir Bahr'* and *'Bahr'*, former having its synonymous in English 'Admiral of Navy' and the latter meaning 'Water-stream' occurred in epigraphs.[28] The erection of bridges in many times deemed necessary for road and water connection in medieval Bengal also. The mention of *al-Qantarah* (meaning bridge), so far traced in at least four epigraphs of the time in question is no doubt a proof of communication facility provided for the people by the state authority and the noble persons.[29] However, all these materials searched out in the epigraphs may be of valuable use for the history-writing of medieval Bengal.

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[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid*, pp. 232-3.
[28] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, *SAPE*, pp. 5, 70-3.
[29] A. H. Dani, *Bibliography*, p. 121.

Scepter-insignia and Eulogical Titles of the Sultans

Following the Transoxian model of their predecessors, the Bengal Sultans on the accession to the throne adopted the *Jalus* title and some times the eulogical title in addition to their proper names as shown in epigraphic and numismatic evidences. The *Jalus* titles like 'Ala al-dunya wa al-Din Abul Muzaffar, Shams al-dunya wa al-Din Abul Mujahid, Rukn al-dunya wa al Din Abul Fath and such Arabic phraseologies express the royal strength and prowess. Prefixing the *Jalus* title the full name, for example, in the first case stands thus Ala al-dunya wa al-Din Abul Muzaffar Husayn Shah.The motive behind adopting the *Jalus* title is presumably to show their royal linage on one hand and to create a sort of awe in the mind of the subject people as well as the rulers of the neighboring hostile countries on the other.[30] Pertinently the use of السطان المعظم *al-Sultan al-Mu'azzam* (the honoured Sultan), السطان الاعظم *al-Sultan al-A'zam* (the exalted Sultan) and سطان السلاطين *Sultan al-Salatin* (the Sultan of the sultans i.e. the greatest Sultan) noticed in the epigraphs needs explanation. As the terminology of السطان المعظم *al-Sultan al-Mu'azzam* is softer than that of السطان الاعظم *al-Sultan al-A'zam* it is reasonably inferred that the use of the former starts with assumption of power. But with the passage of time when the power is consolidated, and the ruler becomes confident of his strength then he assumed the more strong title of السطان الاعظم *al- Sultan al- A'zam*. Sometimes to meet the situation and to imprint his power in the mind of the people at the assumption of his royal power, the Sultan adopts the exalted title of السطان الاعظم *al-Sultan al-A'zam*.[31] In case of Bengal Sultan the term سطان السلاطين *Sultan al-Salatin* seems to be an exaggeration, and it is possibly intended to create an environment of his supremacy in the minds of the people in general and the enemies in particular. However, the three terms mentioned above in their positive application are indicative of the independent sovereign power of the rulers.

Of the eulogical titles as noticed in the epigraphs العادل *al-'Adil* (just), الباذل *al-Badhil* (generous), العالم *al-'Alim* (wise), الفاضل *al-Fadil* (learned), الكامل *al-Kamil* (perfect), الكاشف *al-Kashif* (interpreter), قهرمان *Qahrman* (valiant warrior) and غوث الاسلام والمسلمين *Ghawth al-Islam wa al-Muslimin* (the resort of al- Islam and the Muslims) are the most striking examples.[32] The last one i.e. *Ghawth al-Islam wa al-Muslimin* is usually ascribed to the name of the Sultan without any reservation as he is theoretically assumed to be the defender of faith. To illustrate this point two cases of Bengal Sultans are

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[30] *JBA*, vol. 6, pp. 171 *ff.*

[31] *Ibid*, p. 172.

[32] A. Karim, *CAPIB*, pp. 146-7, 206.

presented here. One is that of Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah and the other is that of Jalal al-Din Fath Shah. The two brothers were properly educated and trained to meet the challenge of time. Rukn al-din Barbak Shah (AD 1459-74) is represented in the epigraphs as *'adil, badhil, fadil, 'alim* and *kamil*. These attributes engraved on the stone-slabs, in the absence of contemporary written materials, highlight praiseworthy qualities of the Sultan. Therefore, on the epigraphic source Rukn al-Din Barbak Shah may be considered as a benevolent Sultan who combined in himself the qualities of justice, munificence, learning, knowledge and sound understanding. His brother Jalal al-Din Fath Shah (AD 1481-86) who at the advanced age was raised to the throne of Bengal by the nobles, completed training in the art of warfare, got mastery over the interpretation of the holy Quran and acquired knowledge of religions and science of human anatomy. An inscription of Gunamant Mosque (Gaur)[33] reveals these aspects of character of the Sultan in the following phraseologies:[34]

قفرمان فی الماء والطین کاشف اسرار القران عالم علوم اللادیان واللابدان

(Tr. Valiant warrior in the sea and land, interpreter of the secrets of the Holy Quran and learned in the knowledge of religions and human bodies.)

The Sultans of Bengal are assisted by several officials in various branches of military, judiciary and civil administration. They carry the official titles which befit their positions. The titles derived from the epigraphs are *Wazir, Shiqdar, Jangdar, Sharabdar, Jamadar, Bahrbak, Kotwal bek 'Ala, Sar-i-Lashkar, Sar-i-Khail, Mahliyan Nawbat 'Ala, Sharabdar Ghayr-i-Mahli, Jamadar Ghayr-i- Mahli, Mir Bahr, Dabir Khas, Karfarman* and *Dastur*. The most dignified of these officials like *Wazir, Shiqdar, Sar-i-Lashkar* and *Jamadar* were entitled to have the charge of administrative units under Bengal Sultanate.[35] In addition to the civil powers they enjoyed the executive and military powers. As one was appointed to such important office he could legally appropriate for himself the lofty title of *Khan al-A'zam, Khaqan al-Mu'azzam* or *Khaqan al-A'zam, Khan al-Mu'azzam* and *Ulugh* to indicate the dimension of his administrative capability.

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[33] S Ahmed, *IB*, p. 123; *JBA*, vol. 6, p. 173.

[34] I have a reservation where the author says 'An inscription of Gunamant Mosque' because there is no *in situ* inscription at Gunamant Mosque situated in Gaur, district Maldah, West Bengal. The inscription which was first published by A. Cunningham and afterwards edited by S. Ahmad and A.H. Dani has been found from a *chala ghar* in nearby Mahadipur village and has been attributed to Gunamant Mosque but not without doubt Since Gunamant Mosque was a *jami* mosque, the said inscription could not belong to it as it speaks of mosque of daily prayer [Ed.]

[35] A. H. Dani, *Bibliography*, p. 108.

Epigraphy and Aesthetic Aspects

Calligraphy and epigraphy are closely related in form and geometric dimension. On the epigraphs calligraphy in the connotation of epigraphy produces a sort of rhythm and harmony besides bringing into prominence the various ornamental motifs for those interested in the study of art history. Like the waves of the ocean it is soothing to the eyes of the connoisseurs of aesthetic art. It is ornamental in form, bold in nature and graceful in its ending.[36] Extant remnants show that the monuments of Bengal Sultanate were not left unornamented. Instead they were covered with terracotta ornamentation or with stone-carving representing creeper designs and other indigenous floral motifs. The aesthetic aspects of the epigraphs executed in the period under study are manifested in various types of ornamentation indigenous in nature. Of the major and minor styles of Arabic calligraphy like *Naskh-Thluth, Muhaqqaq-Raihan, Tawqi-Riqa, Ghubar* and *Bihar* which were used on the stone-slabs, the most ornamental form, though not an independent style is the *Tughra,* richly cultivated on the monuments. Yet it ranked the status of an independent style for its extensive use in the epigraphy of the monuments. The *Tughra* can be formed in the epigraphy with the expansion, contraction, prolongation and alteration of the letters as and when it is found suitable (Fig. 3).[37] In the *Tughra* ornamental style, besides the animal forms, the various kinds of abstract motifs are subject of representation. A few examples are reproduced here to give a visual knowledge of epigraphic niceties and aesthetic values.

A simple type of *Tughra* could be guessed in an epigraph of Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah dated AH 858/AD 1454 (Fig. 4). Here in this epigraph the elongated shafts of the Arabic letters like الف *Alif* and لام *Lam* may be postulated as the straight lines of the standing men and the other letters at their feet be reckoned as the dead over which the funeral prayer is being performed. Another decorative motif may be conjectured in this way that the vertical strokes of the letters are considered as the bamboo poles used for fencing the cornfield and the letters underneath as shrubs and cornstalks.[38] In case of the former assumption it is related to the moment of man's life in this world while in the case of the latter it is connected with the foodstuff, the vital means of man's livelihood in Bengal. The last one is more preferable as it reflects on the indigenous element of Bengal. Arashnagar Inscription of 'Ala

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[36] A. K. M. Yaqub Ali, 'Calligraphy on the Stone-Inscriptions of Bengal Sultanate', *Islamic Culture*, vol. lxviii, No. 2, April 1994, Hyderabad, India, p. 68.

[37] *Ibid*, p. 70; *JBA*, vol. 9 and 10, p. 91.

[38] *JVRM*, vol. 6, p. 106; *JBA*, vols. 9 and 10, p. 92.

al-din Husayn Shah dated AH 907/AD1502 is a fine example of ornamental *Tughra*[39] (Fig. 5). The vertical strokes ending at the top with a series of shafts of scimitars are thirty-three in number. The engraver's art, in this epigraph, is of high order. The single lined epigraphy may represent, in its decorative form, a ship which carries soldiers with swords in hand going to charge the enemies in the riverine tract. The text of the epigraph echoes that notion by ascribing the phraseology of اکرم بروبحر (the most honoured of land and sea) to Sultan 'Ala al-Din Husayn Shah.[40] The decorative scheme may also bear two other possibilities: first, an army camp where the tents are kept tight with a suitable number of poles, and secondly, a roof resembling *chala* house. In any case, the artist's skill noticed in the proportionate arrangement of the shafts and curvatures, finds full play in this epigraph. The bold letterings of لام الف نون and ي amidst the elongated vertical strokes suggest the likeness of a curved roof which is a distinctive characteristic as well as a special feature of Bengal architecture.[41] It is really interesting to note that overhead and underneath of the inscribed space a series of fifteen small lotus motifs are engraved to enhance the beauty of ornamentation and at the same time to recall the indigenous lotus design on the decorative scheme of the stone-slab.

Further an epigraph of the time of Shams al-Din Muzaffar Shah (AH 1490-1493) dated AH 898/AD 1493 arrests our attention to its epigraphic niceties and decorative motifs.[42] (Fig. 6). It may be conjectured as the 'Thatched roof variety of *tughra'* in its ornamental design. The barbed الف *Alif* and لام *Lam* in the whole of the epigraph can be compared with bamboo stockades bearing the thrust of the thatched roof shaped by the crescent like *nun* نون and ى *ya* placed over the clustered letters at the bottom. The surface of the whole epigraph seems to represent a series of *do-chala* thatched roof of the bamboo cottage. The clustered letters running all through the epigraph from right to left can be presumed as inmates of the bamboo cottage.[43] These features are common for the houses of the general people of rural Bengal. These few examples bear witness to this fact that the epigraphy engraved on the stone-slabs, if properly examined from aesthetic point of view, may help much in the writing of art-history of Bengal Sultanate in spite of the dire paucity of written records.

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[39] *JVRM*, vol. 6, p. 108; *JBA*, vols. 9 and 10, pp. 95-6.
[40] *JBA*, vols. 9 and 10, p. 95; *JVRM*, vol. 6, p. 108.
[41] *JBA*, vols. 9 and 10, p. 96.
[42] *Ibid*, pp. 94-5.
[43] *Ibid*, p. 94.

Concluding Remarks

Historiography of ancient and medieval times of any global region should take into consideration both the sources of written records and archaeological finds to get its complete form. The modern history has least concern to consult the archaeological source for making its completion. This is why the study of modern history is more popular among the learners than that of ancient and medieval history. The case is not different in the study of South Asian and especially of Bengal history. The language deficiency in Sanskrit and her sister dialects in the case of ancient period and that in Arabic and Persian in the case of medieval period of Indian subcontinent are often held responsible for such tendency. With a strong background in these languages one must be proficient in the technique and methodology of decipherment of the epigraphs to extract materials for writing history of ancient and medieval Bengal. I have mentioned above a few directions regarding the mode of decipherment of Arabic text in the epigraphs and their utilization of deriving materials to reconstruct and enrich the history writing of medieval Bengal. Above all, both novice and expert must have the patience and tenacity to decipher and utilize epigraphy as source for history writing of medieval Bengal.

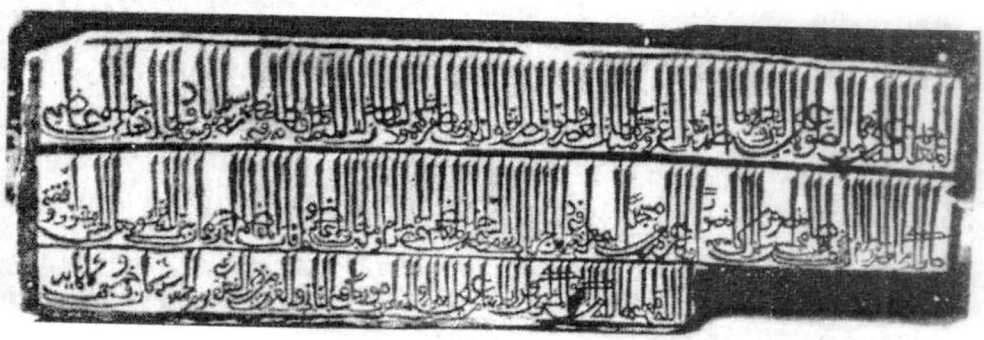

Fig. 1. Navagrama Inscription (Simple *tughra*)

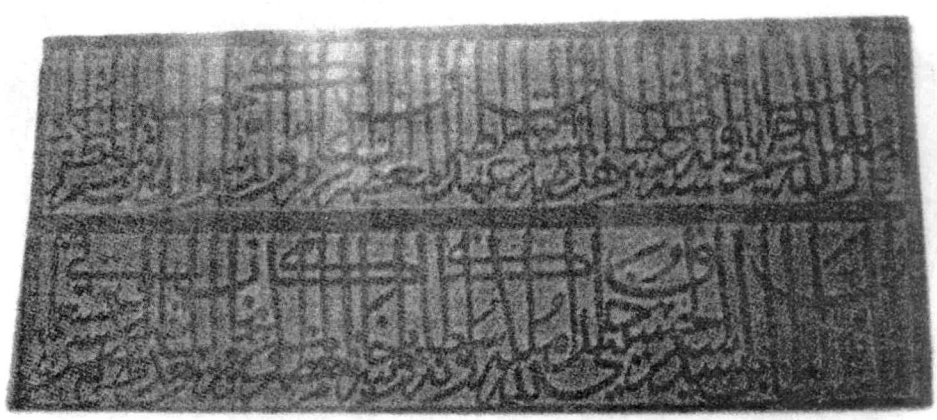

Fig. 2. Inscription of Paharpur Museum (*Siqayah*- simple type)

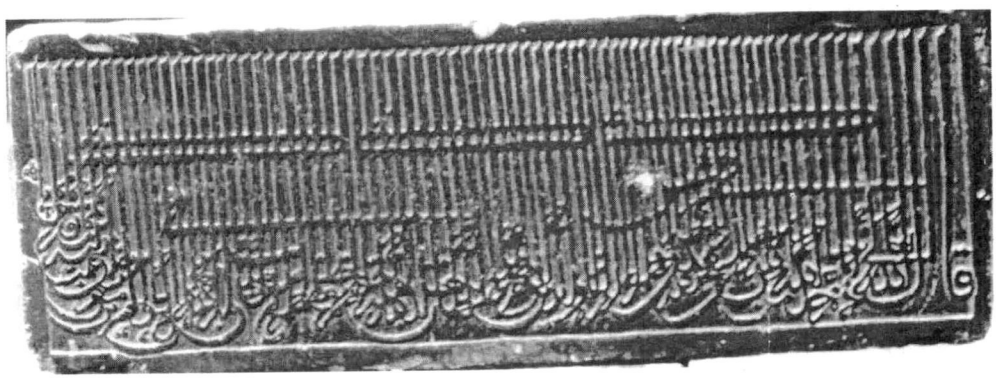

Fig. 3. Gazipur, Gaur Area in Bangladesh (*tughra*- ascending type)

Fig. 4. Inscription of Paharpur Museum (Simple type *tughra*)

Fig. 5. Arashnagar Inscription (Intricate *tughra do-chala* type, ship type)

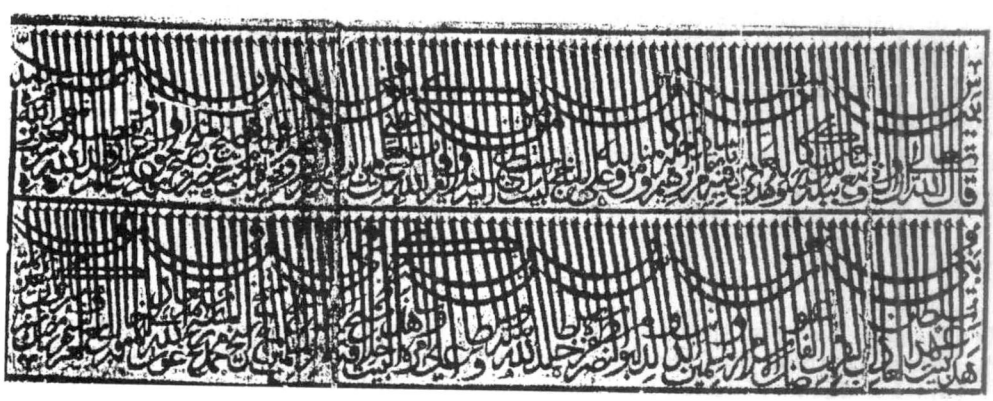

Fig. 6. Intricate tughra (*do-chala* rural house type)

Persian Chronicles of Akbar's Time: As Sources of Medieval History

G. S. KHWAJA

"History is such a gem, among all the sciences, which provides light in the darkness."

Abul Fazl

The medieval period of history is the most interesting part of the history of our country, especially after the arrival of Central Asian rulers. Because the Indians, for the first time, started bilateral relationship with the people of a new religion, a new language and a new culture hitherto not known to them. As a result, an era of new experimentations started and people of diverse orientations made preparation to make up mind for adaptations in the field of various art forms and oriental sciences.

Historiography was one of the important sciences which, the Muslim rulers and their nobility brought along with them. Some of the world's first and foremost works in history came into being, which are the only source of information for the political and cultural history of not only India but also of Iran and central Asia.

The beginning of history writing in its form and substance in Rome and then its journey through a sea-change under the influence of the Church is part of history. In the present discourse, there is no need to narrate such a preliminary account; but the reforms made by Ibn-e-Khaldun (d. AD 1406) need a special mention. It was Ibn-e-Khaldun, who distinguished among story-telling, myths, morals, epics, etc., and laid down the principles of history writing, *Muqaddama*,[1] being the first of the seven volumes, is the path-breaking work in history writing.

[1] The *Muqaddimah*, also known as the *Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun*(meaning in English: Ibn Khaldun's Introduction) or *Ibn Khaldun's Prolegomena*, is a book written by the Tunisian Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun in 1377 which records an early view of universal history. Some modern thinkers view it as the first work dealing with the philosophy of history or the social sciencesof sociology, demography, historiography or cultural history and economics. The *Muqaddimah* also deals with Islamic theology, political theory and the natural

H.E. Burns rightly says:
'Some of the ablest medieval historians were Muslims, and greatest among them, Ibn-e-Khaldun, completely out-distanced any Christian historian of the Middle Age in his fundamental grasp of the principles of human and cultural development.'

This was the point of time from where the world history started being written in a standardised form, both chronologically as well as geographically.

After the establishment of Muslim power in India by the end of the twelfth century, history writing saw a sea-change in which there was more substance of historical events than the mere philosophy or religious discourse. Ziya-ud-Din Barani, the author of *Tarikh-e-Firuzshahi* writes:
'The historians of medieval period adopted sobriety in historiography. It was, to them, a work of the grade of *ilm-e-hadis* (the science of tradition of Prophet Muhammad). This is why they thought that history should be based on truth; exaggeration and flowery style should be avoided so that factual depiction is not sacrificed for sophistication.'

During the early Sultanate period, a few works of history were done in Arabic in which more stress was laid on moral; but when Tughluqs came to power and Persian language became the official language, some remarkable chronicles of history came into existence; *Tabaqat-e-Nasiri* (c.mid thirteenth century AD) by Minhaj-us-Siraj Juzjani; *Qiran-us-Sadain* (AD 1289), *Miftah-ul-Futuh* (AD 1291), *Tarikh-e-Alai* (AD 1311), *Nuh-Sipahr* (AD 1319) and *Tughluq Nama* (AD 1325) by Hazrat Amir Khusrau; *Tarikh-e-Firuzshahi* of Ziya-ud-Din Barani; *Tarikh-e-Firuzshahi* (c. fourteenth century AD) by Shams Siraj Afif, *Sirat-e-Firuzshahi* by Sultan Firuz Shah himself; *Futuh-us-Salatin* (AD 1350) by Khwaja Abd-e-Malik Isami; *Shah Nama* by Badr Chach; *Insha-e-Mahru* by Ain-ul-Mulk Multani; *Tarikh-e-Mubarak Shahi* by Yahya bin Sirhindi; *Waqiat-e-Mushtaqi* by Shaikh Rizqullah and *Tarikh-e-Shahi* of Ahmad Yadgar are the works which deserve mention.

In addition to these, under the regional sultanates, historiography developed independently. The *Zafar-ul-Walih bi Muzaffar wa Alih* by Haji Dabir and *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* by Ali Muhammad Khan (at Ahmedabad); *Burhan-e-Maasir* by Sayyid Ali Tabataba (at Ahmadnagar); *Tazkirat-ul-Muluk* by Rafi-

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sciences of biology and chemistry. Ibn Khaldun wrote the work in AD 1377 as the preface or first book of his planned world history, the *Kitab al-Ibar* (full title: *Kitâbu l-ibar wa Diwânu l-Mubtada' wa l-abar fî tarikhi l-arab wa l-Barbar wa man Âsarahum min Đawî* "Book of Lessons, Record of Beginnings and Events in the History of the Arabs and Berbers and their Powerful Contemporaries"), but already in his lifetime it came to be regarded as an independent work.

ud-Din Shirazi, *Basatin-us-Salatin* of Ibrahim Zubairi and *Gulshan-e-Ibrahimi* by Abu'l-Qasim Firishta (all at Bijapur) and *Matla-us-Sadain* of Abd-ur-Razzaq (at Golconda) are some of the important works.

The commencement of Mughal rule in India was virtually beginning of a new era in history writing. The founder of this dynasty Emperor Babur himself got recognition as a chronicler. Abu'l Fazl writes about the contents of *Tuzak-e-Baburi* as under:

'Events of his life right from the beginning of the rule to death (he) has recorded in chaste and rich language'

Famous Orientalist Professor Stanley Lane Poole writes about the authenticity and credibility of *Tuzak-e-Baburi*:

'If ever there were a case, when the testimony of a single historical document, unsupported by other evidence should be accepted as sufficient proof, it is the case of Babur's memoirs'.

Professor H. M. Elliot ranks *Tuzak* among the best and most authentic autobiographies.

Thus, it is important to note that such a sense of accuracy and standard in history writing made historians of Mughal period conscious of sobriety in their attitude towards historiography which was very much apparent in the works penned during Emperor Humayun's time too. Examples may be cited are *Humayun Nama* (AD 1534) by Imam-ud-Din Khwandmiri; *Tarikh-e-Humàyun* (AD 1592) by Bayazid, *Tarikh-e-Rashidi* (AD 1551) by Mirza Haider Doghlat and *Tazkirat-ul-Waqiat* (AD 1587) of Mihtar Jauhar Aftabchi.

The Chronicles of Emperor Akbar's time (AD 1556-1605)

The reign of Emperor Akbar is significant for more than one reason. Akbar basically had a very innovative mind and always loved experimenting with everything. He invented a new religion, a new era, a new system of *mansabdari,* so on and so forth. He was always considered as illiterate but virtually he was not. Akbar was conquering new territories; he was exposed to regional histories and cultures, he wanted to experiment with newer forms of art. Therefore, when he created a new post of *malik-ush-shuara* to appoint Faizi in it, he also commissioned a committee of historians to write not only the thousand years' history of Islam but also assigned job of compiling history of his empire to different historians.

Chronologically, *Tabaqat-e-Akbari* by Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad Bakhshi is the first important work of his time. Nizam-ud-Din, son of Khwaja Muqim the minister of Emperor Humayun, wrote this history for quenching his own thirst for writing. His vast experience of service on important posts

in different provinces became the subject matter of his book. *Tabaqat*, according to its author, contains a *muqaddama* (preface), nine chapters and one *khatima* (conclusion) covering history of nearly all Muslim rulers and that of Akbar up to the 39th regnal year of his reign with a description of *Tabaqat* (i.e. cadres) of the Empire. Later on, many other historians including Badauni and Ferishta drew references from this work. The author's *nisbah* (agnomen) *'Nizami'* is the chronogram for its date of completion, which is AH 1002 (AD 1594). It is a basic document on the bureaucracy and administrative history of Akbar. Many historians, contemporary and otherwise, have drawn references from this reliable source. It has been published and translated also.

Another worth mentioning work of history of this period is *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* of Abdul Qadir Badauni which is considered the most authentic record of Akbar's government. He was not an officially appointed historian, on the one hand, and was critical of *Din-e-Ilahi* among other policies of Akbar, on the other, for which he was fired also. For this reason Emperor Jahangir had banned this book during his time. But these characteristics of the author make this work more valuable. According to the evaluators, Abul Fazl's history could be doubted for his being a minister-historian, faithful to his master, but *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh* is away from all such biases. This is why it carries more importance and value as an authentic source of history and Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni stands tall among all the historiographers of Mughal period. It comprises four chapters each on Ghaznavides, Sultans of Delhi, Mughal Emperors Babur and Humayun, and Akbar's reign including biographies of thirty-eight scholars, one hundred sixty-nine philosophers and physicians and one hundred sixty-seven poets. It was completed, as per the contemporary references, in AH 1004 (AD 1594). Abul Fazl's brother Faizi speaks high of his knowledge and puts Badauni at a very high esteem. It is a published work.

Abul Fazl Allami was Akbar's prime minister and court historian, who was entrusted with the project to write a complete document on Akbar's Empire. The *Akbar Nama* and the *Ain-e-Akbari* are the monumental works of history penned by Abul Fazl. *Ain-e-Akbari* is considered to be the first effort towards compilation of a gazetteer or encyclopaedia of a Government. These works have made Abul Fazl a world class historian. He was from a scholarly family of Yemenid Arabs which, around fourteenth century AD, came and settled down in Sindh and then came to Nagore. Akbar preferred Abul Fazl to other historians of his court like Nizamu-ud-Din Bakhshi, Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni, Faizi Sirhindi, Fathullah Shirazi, Abdur-Rahim Khan-e-Khanan, Masum Nami Bhakkari, Jauhar Aftabchi etc. for his intelligence and penmanship. Many Orientalists have questioned the authenticity of this

work for it is being written by a court-historian and also for its rhetoric Persian prose. Professor V.A. Smith is much critical of him for these reasons but H. Blochmann writes in the preface of *Ain-e-Akbari*:

'A study of *Akbar Nama* will show that the charges are absolutely unfounded...we may pardon Abul Fazl when he praises (Akbar) because he finds a true hero'.

Professor H. M. Elliot who translated *Akbar Nama* has opined:

'A careful examination of the whole of the book, and the translating of many passages compel to withhold his assent from this unqualified condemnation...apart from these occasional blemishes, his fault are those of the rhetorician rather of flatterer, and his style ought be judged by an oriental standard, not by a contrast with the choicest of European memoirs'.

What makes *Akbar Nama* a valuable document is its data meticulously collected from the officials of the empire themselves as first-hand information, verified, rewritten, vetted and then placed in the manual. Abul Fazl himself writes in the *khatima* (i.e. concluding chapter) of *Akbar Nama* that he would give twenty officials/writers (*danishmandan*) the same event to write, compare and select the best of them, review five times, put *Hijri* and equivalent *Ilahi* years in it and give titles/subtitles to them and include in the manuscript. Abul Fazl himself writes how meticulously he has collected the material for this book:

"احوال وواقعات از ملازمان درگاه وندیمان ایں دودمان دولت از
پیران ہوش مند راست گفتار و جوانان بیدار مغز ورشکر داری پرسیدم و
بقید کتابت می آوردم"۔

Ain-e-Akbari, the third volume of *Akbar Nama* is different from earlier two volumes. It is free from the rhetoric and flowery expressions because the author wanted to compile the manual of the empire and also statistics of the produce and revenue collection. It is really a mine of information about the rules, regulations, topography, revenue system, social habits and customs of the people of Hindustan and many other things. *Ain* is such an important valuable work that no researcher of medieval period can do any good without it. It is a path maker's work that too at a time when there was no such trend of including statistical information in a work of history. Regarding the literary value of *Akbar Nama,* it is said that Abul Fazl's work has the value in prose what Nizami Ganjwi's *Khamsa* has got in Poetry. There are a number of published editions and translations of *Akbar Nama*

available. The most popular edition, among others, is that of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

One more 'for-the-first-time' work was commissioned by Emperor himself and that was *Tarikh-e-Alafi*. As we all have celebrated the new millennium in 2000 with great fervour, Akbar too got the opportunity to be a witness to completion of millennium of *Hijri* calendar. When his reign was to enter 1000 *Hijri* era (AD 1592), he ordered for writing history of Islam for the *Alafia* i.e. millennium (*Alaf* means one thousand in Arabic). In the beginning, a committee of seven noted historians was formed for this prestigious project which comprised of Naqeeb Khan, Shah Fathullah Ali, Hakim Humam, Hakim Ali, Haji Ibrahim Sirhindi, Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Bakhshi and Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni then Mulla Ahmad Thattawi i.e. of Thatta in Sind and was assigned the work. After two volumes, when Mulla was murdered in AD 1588, Mirza Jafar Baig *alias* Asaf Khan completed it. Akbar took personal interest in its compilation and saw that it is completed within the stipulated time. According to Badauni, it contains three volumes and its dates are reckoned with *Rahla* (the death of Prophet) as well as with *Hijri* era. Its language is simple and lucid and contents are authentic which refer to many earlier works like *Tarikh-e-Tabari, Rauzat-us-Safa, Habib-us-Siyar etc.* It is very surprising to know that such an important work has not been published yet. Hand-written copies of this work are preserved at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad, Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Chennai, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh, Oriental and India Office Collection, The British Library and in British Museum London, Kitab Khana-e-Majlis-e-Shura, Tehran, Kitab Khana-e-Astana-e-Quds Rizwi, Mashhad and also at National Museum, New Delhi.

Tarikh-e-Akbarshahi of Shaikh Ilahdad Faizi Sirhindi is another important work written during Akbar's reign. Ilahdad Faizi's father Maulana Ali Sher Sirhindi was a great scholar and the celebrated author of *Tabaqat-e-Akbari,* Khwaja Nizam-ud-Din Bakhshi was his disciple. Ilahdad Faizi, born in AH 974 (AD 1566), started writing his book when he was around thirty-six, i.e. in AH 1010 (AD 1603). This is a narrative of forty-seven years of rule of Emperor Akbar containing forty-seven chapters, one for each year. Its style is closer to that of Abul Fazl's *Akbar Nama* but in many places he has used very simple language. It remained a very important fact that after the untimely assassination of Abul Fazl, the remaining portion of *Akbar Nama* was completed by Ilahdad only. *Tarikh-e-Akbarshahi* abruptly ends with the events of AH 1010 (AD 1603) describing Akbar's return to Agra from the victorious expedition of Asir Fort (Burhanpur) of Khandesh. It is accepted by all that *Tarikh-e-Akbarshahi* is an important chronicle used as a source material of Mughal history.

There should be a special mention of *Humayun Nama* of Gulbadan Begum, the lovely princes and aunt of Akbar. After the uprising of AD 1857, Colonel George William Hamilton sold this manuscript, among other antiquities, to the British Museum, London. This work is an account of socio-political history of the time of Babur and Humayun. Gulbadan Begum's pen has drawn a beautiful picture of the life in the palaces, customs and rituals of the then society, day-to-day lives of the royal folks. The history penned in this book is an album of true images of the cultural life in medieval India. Its language is not chaste Persian; beautiful patches of Turkish idioms and phrases have made it a document with blending of two literary streams. Gulbadan Begum herself has written about her approach to writing:

"بیان واقع شاید کمترک بخاطر مانده بود۔ بنابر حکم بادشاہی آنچہ شنیدہ
و بخاطر بود نوشتہ می شود..... در اوّل این جزو از واقعہ حضرت بادشاہ بابا
م نوشتہ می شود۔ اگر چہ در واقعہ نامہ حضرت بادشاہ بابام این سخنان
مذکور است۔ بنابر تیمناً و تبرکاً نوشتہ می شود۔"

Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhaddis Dehlawi the famous theologian of Akbar's time is credited with a book on the history of Akbar's time which is titled *Tarikh-e-Haqqi*. Inspired by *Tarikh-e-Firuzshahi,* this book runs into two volumes; the first volume is devoted to the history of the sultanate period in India, from the beginning up to Akbar's time, whereas the second volume deals with the history of the regional sultanates. The total work is spread over 142 pages of eighteen lines each. It is obvious that with this brevity he could not justify the subject matter in a befitting manner. In fact, Shaikh Dehlawi lived long even after Akbar's time, till AH 1052 (AD 1642) and completed the work in post-Akbar period. The full text of the book is not published. One copy of its manuscript is available at the Library of Royal Asiatic Society, London, and another at the British Museum, London. Professor Elliot has done the abridged translation with the personal copy of Nawab Nasir-ud-Din of Panipat.

Mir Masum Nami Bakkari, the minister, poet and calligrapher of Akbar's court, has also written an important chronicle entitled *Tarikh-e-Sind* on the history of Akbar's reign which, because of its author's popularity, got currency as *Tarikh-e-Masumi*. It was completed in AH 1009 (AD 1601). Nami was a close friend of Nizam-ud-Din Bakhshi and Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni, the celebrated historians of Akbar's court. As per the version of *Ma'asir-ul-*

Umara, Nami had helped them in their works which indicates that he had a knack for history writing. Masum Nami wrote that his motto behind writing this book was to equip his son Mir Buzurg with the information of the Empire:

"آنرا برای فرزند خود میر بزرگ در قید تحریر آورده تا که از مطالعه احوال
گذشتگان درس عبرت گرفته با خلاق رضیه متصف واز عادات رذیه
محترز شود"

Tarikh-e-Masumi can be graded, in terms of its contents and substance, as the most authentic book on Sind after *Chach Nama*. It comprises four chapters; it begins with the capture of Sind by Arabs and history of Umaiyyad and Abbasids, then history of the rulers of Sind, history of Arghauni Kings and in the last chapter administrative history of Sind under Akbar's occupation. It also contains biographies of Persian poets, saints and scholars which is a valuable treasure of knowledge apart from other contents. Its language is simple and lucid and has got a literary value if diction and style is any parameter. Nami, being a poet, has shown his penmanship in prose too. The British Museum, London, and India Office Library, London, have got copies of *Tarikh-e-Masumi* in their manuscript collection. The only printed version of this book is the one which Umar bin Daud Pota has edited with valuable introduction and notes published by Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, in 1938.

As a concluding remark, I shall say that it is all about Persian works and I assert that for researches in medieval history of India, there cannot be any road bypassing these history chronicles. Even for the history of this period Central Asia and Iran depends on Indian works. But to delve deep into this ocean, knowledge of Persian language is necessary. I see a continuous decline of interest in studies of Persian language nowadays. Another menace is total dependence on the hazardous translations by Orientalists and habit of drawing references from secondary sources. This situation is not going to serve any purpose to the cause of writing history. Hence in this centenary year of Professor A.B.M. Habibullah, I wish we could adopt the methodology of this great historian and visionary who not only studied in, wrote on, propagated research through original sources of medieval history, but also made efforts to establish a department for serious researches in medieval history and culture. Nurturing and promoting this discipline will only be a real tribute to that sincere soul.

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URBANIZATION

Medieval Town of Nadia *c.* AD 1200–1800: Location and Morphology

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Bengali writings since the sixteenth century had emphasized much on the town of Nadia principally as the place of birth of Chaitanya and as the citadel of Vaishnavism. Most of these writings are in Bengali and had remained beyond the purview of non-Bengali scholars. In the process, the thirteenth century town of Nadia had remained in the background although a recent controversy has started on the location. It would be our endeavour here to locate the town of Nadia in the early thirteenth century and to try to trace its evolution through the centuries till we come to the second half of the fifteenth century. We have a good and perhaps the only source in the writing of Minhaj-us Siraj[1] who came to the city of Lakshmanavati around AD 1243. There he interviewed two soldiers named Hisamuddin and Husamuddin who had accompanied Ikthiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji to Nadia. In that sense it was the version of two participants although they must have been speaking from memory of events taken place nearly 40 years back. Whether their memory failed them is difficult to say, but unless we get some contradictory source there is no reason to disbelieve the version. It may also be noted that Minhaj came to Bengal in AD 1243 and had written this account around AD 1260. There is, therefore, a gap of nearly sixty years between the event and the writing. It is almost certain that Minhaj, being a legal expert and a judge, must have taken notes on which he had based his account of the most important event in the history of Bengal till then.

II

Before we go to the history of the raid of Nadia, it is perhaps necessary to see the physical changes in the river in Bengal since the River Ganges will hold the key to identify the town of Nadia in the early thirteenth century.

Major James Rennell[2] had postulated that since the decline of the port of Tamralipta, the rivers were moving away towards the east. This seems

[1] Minhaj-us Siraj, *Tabakat-ı Nasırı* (tr. & annotated by Major H. R. Raverty), The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1995, reprint of 1881 edition, 2 Volumes, vol. i, pp. 554-60.
[2] Major James Rennell, *Memoir of a Map of Hindustan*, Calcutta, 1976 (reprint), p. 148.

plausible since the River Damodar had come towards the east and its branches were spreading in the area known as *Rarh* region.[3] A town called Kanchannagar has grown quite close to Burdwan on one of the branches of Damodar River which has been termed by the local historians as "Bhalluka Civilization",[4] although nothing much is known about it except that the town used to manufacture iron vessels and perhaps weapons brought from the Santhal Parganas by the tribal people. Here the question is related to the origin of urbanization that would suggest revival of trade and commerce. R. S. Sharma[5] had postulated that between the fourth and the tenth centuries, the overseas trade of India was stopped leading to the decay of towns. He had excluded Bengal from the affected area. Nihar Ranjan Ray suggested that there was no evidence of the decay of towns but there was no expansion of towns.[6] The entire thesis is doubtful, given the flourishing Chola Empire in the south and the evidences of the Persian and Arabic travellers and geographers who had praised the trade and urban areas of western India. Some of them referred to the contact between the port of Bengal, near Chittagong and some ports in the south.[7] The poem of Sandhyakar Nandi[8] shows the use of gold and silver ornaments worn by the women of the royal family during the Pala period and it may be surmised that these gold and silver had come from outside India through trade. The large number of coins found in the Pala period in Bengal[9] and the total absence of coins during the period of the Senas in twelfth century[10] suggests some kind of absence of trade during the second half of the twelfth century. It has been stated that

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[3] Nihar Ranjan Ray, *Bangalir Itihas* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1993 (revised ed.), pp. 76-8; M.M. Chakrabarty, "Notes on the Geography of Bengal" in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, May 1908, vol. xiv, no. 5, pp. 81-3. Both of them have accepted the view of Rennell.

[4] Gadhadhar Konar "Aspects of Bhalluka Civilization" (Bengali) in Gopikanta Konar (ed.), *Vardhaman Samagra* (Bengali), Calcutta, 2009, 5 volumes, vol. i, pp. 86-8. I, pp. 304-12.

[5] R. S. Sharma, *Urban Decay in India*, New Delhi, 1987.

[6] Nihar Ranjan Ray, *op. cit*, p. 165.

[7] Maqbul Ahmad, *Arabic Classical Accounts of India and China*, Shimla, 1989.

[8] Haraprasad Shastri (ed.), *Sandhyakar Nandi: Ram Charitam*, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1969, particularly verses 31A, 32B, 37A-B.

[9] So far not a single coin belonging to Pala period in Bengal has been reported with authenticity. In recent past, an article of Pankaj Tandon entitled 'A Gold Coin of the Pala King Dharmapala' has been published (*Numismatic Chronicle*, no. 166, 2006, pp. 327-33),where the author mentioned that if the attribution of the coin to Dharmapala is correct (on the basis of the reading of the legend on the obverse), this would be the first coin of a Pala king of Bengal. Though there are several other series of silver coins of post-Gupta period reported primarily from Harikela-Samatata region of Bengal.[Ed.]

[10] Niharranjan Ray, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-2.

in some areas gold powder was used as medium of exchange during the period of the Senas. Considering all these it may be postulated that there was a period of lull in overseas trade and commerce but they were on the process of recovery. It is in this context that we would see the attack and plunder of Bakhtyar of Nadia in early thirteenth century.

III

Since the late nineteenth century, the date of the invasion of Nadia by Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji has been shrouded in controversy. Abdul Karim has now satisfactorily shown that the attack of Bakhtyar in Nadia occurred either in late AD 1203 or early AD 1204.[11] The account of Minhaj on the attack is very specific. After Bakhtyar had practically overrun Bihar, which was part of the kingdom of Lakshmana Sena, the news had reached Nadia when the king Lakshmana Sena was already there. This shows that he had not fled from Lakshmanavati for fear of Bakhtyar as has been alleged by some. On hearing the news of the arrival of Bakhtyar in Bihar, the Brahmins and the rich merchants, after getting reports from spies, left Nadia. Yet a question comes up. For more than a year Bakhtyar had plundered Bihar (he did not destroy Nalanda monastery), but there was no attempt by Lakshmana Sena to check his depredations. Although he was then eighty years old, yet he was not coward. In his youth he had participated in many battles. It is possible that he had sent his soldiers to guard the Teliaghari pass, the gateway to Bengal from Bihar.

According to Minhaj, Bakhtyar with his army eluded the check posts and appeared quite close to Nadia. Obviously they took the Jharkhand route which was unguarded. Some doubt has been expressed whether this route through dense jungles could have been utilized by such a big army group. But this route has been used quite a few times by big army groups. In AD 1538, Sher Shah, after plundering Gaur, retreated through this route. In AD 1743, the Marathas under Bhaskar Pundit, had used this route to elude the troops of Alivardi Khan and had appeared before Burdwan. The English archaeologist Beglar had surveyed this route and found traces of the use of this route by the Jain merchants during the tenth and the eleventh century.[12] Possibly they were using the port of Hijli since Tamralipta had fallen much earlier and Satgaon had not yet started its overseas trading. The use of this route must have surprised Lakshmana Sena. It may be surmised that he

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[11] Abdul Karim 'Date of Bakhtyar Khalji's Conquest of Nadia' in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, (Humanities)*, 1979-81, nos. xxiv-xxvi, pp. 1-10.

[12] J. D. Beglar, *Report on Tours of South-Eastern Provinces in 1874-75 & 1875-76*, Archaeological Survey of India, vol. 13, New Delhi, 1970 (reprint).

had posted his troops at the Teliaghari pass but they eluded them. Bakhtyar arrived west of Nadia and he kept his main army in a jungle nearby to conceal his intention. With seventeen horsemen he entered the gate of the town. The guards and the passerby people thought that they had come to sell horses, which seemed quite usual to them. At this point we may stop to discuss the location of the thirteenth century town of Nadia.

It is known for certain that Nadia town was located on the bank of the Bhagirathi. The map of James Rennell in the late eighteenth century and the maps of the early nineteenth century showed this clearly. But the question is, on which bank the town was located in the early thirteenth century? We would see that the late fifteenth century Bengali writers had placed the town of Nadia on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi. But the description of the attack of Bakhtyar as given by Minhaj suggests otherwise. He did not mention any crossing of the river before entering the gate of the town. This shows that the river in the early thirteenth century was flowing on the eastern side of the town and the town was located on the western bank of the river. The mode of escape of the king Lakshmana Sena from Nadia would also suggest this location.

After entering the gate of the town, Bakhtyar and his horsemen slowly proceeded towards the palace. When they had reached the palace gate they heard loud noise coming from the gate as the main army of Bakhtyar had attacked the guards of the gate who were resisting the troop. Bakhtyar and his horsemen began to attack the guards of the palace which also created a loud noise. The king Lakshmana Sena was then sitting to eat his meal in the golden plate. After hearing the noise, he immediately left the palace alone without his slippers, as stated by Minhaj, through the backdoor of the palace and had arrived at the river bank from where he took a boat to Samatata and Banga. Bakhtyar occupied the palace and his family as well as his treasures, elephants and horses. Meanwhile, the main army of Bakhtyar, after overpowering the guards of the gate of the town, began to plunder it for three days. Minhaj stated that they got so much property that he could not describe it and Bakhtyar left for Lakshmanavati which was occupied by him without opposition.

The description of the escape of the King who fled to Vikrampur in eastern Bengal where his dynasty continued to rule for nearly one hundred year showed that the river was behind the palace and it was not far off. If the palace was located on the eastern bank then the river would have been in front of the palace and not behind. It also seems that the palace was not far from the gate of the town, perhaps less than a mile, since the king could hear the noise from inside the palace. One may surmise that the town was not a big one. It may have been one mile in length and about two miles or so

in breadth. In that case the population inside would have been a few thousand. It may be stated that according to Minhaj, the Brahmins and the rich merchants had left the town before the arrival of Bakhtyar. It has been generally postulated that these Brahmins and merchants had left for Tibet. But they perhaps had fled to eastern Bengal and Kamrup. Some of them possibly had come down to lower Bengal or modern 24 Parganas where the Turks could come only after 1255.[13] It is clear that Bakhtyar did not occupy the town and it was a mere plundering raid.

There has been no reference to Nadia since the early thirteenth to the second half of the fifteenth century except coins dated AH 653 (AH 1255) of Sultan Mughisuddin, which stated that the coin was made from the revenue of Nadia. A third time rebel, this man defeated the troops of Delhi and had conquered Nadia in AD 1255, to commemorate which he issued the coin.[14] This seems to be the first conquest and occupation of the town of Nadia by the Turks. Obviously the Turks continued to take the revenue of Nadia for some time although there is no proper evidence except the above mentioned coin. The question that comes was what happened to the palace and other building of the town. Even there was no trace of the wall or the gate which led K.R. Qanungo to suggest that the wall was made of bamboos[15] which is very unlikely in a prosperous town where the king is residing. There was a high mound in the town which was claimed till the middle of the thirteenth century to be the palace of the king Ballal Sena who was supposed to have retired here in his old age to write books. In the decade of the 1950's, the Archaeological Survey of India excavated this mound and found it to be Pancharatna temple, probably of the Buddhists, constructed between the tenth and the twelfth century AD. The ruins are still there. There is no evidence of ruins even of any other structure of the period. But this is not unique. There is no evidence of ruins of any building in the city of Lakshmanavati except a walled enclosure called the fort of Ballal Sena located at the north of the ruins of Gaur. There is no evidence of any ruins of the buildings of Satgaon except a broken mosque at the western end although the map of Joao de Barros[16] made in 1550 had shown several rows of houses standing on the bank of the Saraswati River. The contemporary Bengali

[13] Minhaj stated that they had left for Sankanat, Bang and Kamrud. Sankanat has been taken as Samatata and Kamrud as Kamrup.

[14] K. R. Qanungo in Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Dhaka University, 1972, p. 52, reprint of 1st edition of 1948.

[15] *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

[16] Illustration of Barros was drawn up in 1550 and was published in 1615. The authentic copy of the Portuguese map was printed by A. Cortesao in his book *Cartographiae Cartographos des Portugais Seculos XVe-XVIe*, Lisbon, 2 Vols. 1935. Since then it has been printed in many Indian publications including mine.

literature had praised Satgaon for its buildings.[17] Yet there are no ruins except the part of a temple, lying under water and seen during the dry season. The explanation seems to be that these three towns had been engulfed by the movement of the river as happened in case of Tanda in the early nineteenth century. The river Ganges had left its earlier course and had moved through the town of Lakshmanavati which led Lakshmana Sena to shift to Nadia perhaps by the end of the twelfth century. There are sand fields in the north of Gaur from where people are still taking sand by truckload. Nadia had a similar fate and the river in its movement had engulfed the city for which there was no reference to Nadia for a long time. As we would see the modern Nadia is located in a slightly different location.

Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay[18] had suggested in his Bengali book that Nadia of Bakhtyar was located 25 miles west of Gaur at a place called Naudia by Minhaj.[19] The spelling of course does not mean much since Minhaj spelt Lakshmana as Lachmania. Rakhaldas stated that nothing much has been found at Nadia bearing the name of Lakshmana Sena. This Naudia has mounds spread over a big field although no excavation or exploration has taken place here to confirm or reject the thesis of Rakhaldas. But this thesis has been accepted by a Bangladeshi archaeologist, A.K.M. Zakaria[20] and much later by Syed Ejaz Hussain.[21] First of all, there is a very strong legend of association of Ballal Sena and Lakshmana Sena with Nadia. There is also the Pancharatna temple, probably of the Pala period. But so far nothing has been found at Naudia. But there is irrefutable argument against the thesis of Rakhaldas. We know that the river Ganges had come to the west of Gaur flowing in front of the ruins to meet the river Pagla in the south of the ruins. The river Ganges had remained in that bed till at least the late sixteenth century since the visiting traveller Ralph Fitch saw the river hitting the wall of Tanda on the other bank of the river.[22] The river was moving towards the west and in the early nineteenth century it had engulfed Tanda. Fitch

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[17] Sukumar Sen (ed.), *Vipradaser Manasavijay* (Bengali), The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 142-3.

[18] Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay, *Banglar Itihas* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1987, 2 volumes, reprint of 1st ed. of 1914, vol. i, pp. 286-7 & vol. ii, pp. 16-17. Rakhaldas wrote that the account of Minhaj is a fantasy. K. R. Qanungo has accepted the Jharkhand route (*op. cit.*).

[19] Minhaj called it *Nudia*, not *Naudia*. This has been specified by Raverty (see notes in Minhaj, *op. cit.*).

[20] See the notes of A. K.M. Zakaria in his Bengali translation of *Tabakat-i Nasiri*, Dhaka, 1984, pp. 26-9.

[21] Syed Ejaz Husain, *The Bengal Sultanate: Politics, Economy and Trade (AD 1205 – 1576)*, Delhi, 2003, pp. 8-9.

[22] Account of Ralph Fitch in William Foster (ed.), *Early Travels in India*, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 24-6, reprint.

stated that the river is generally a bit distant from the city when he visited Tanda after 1586. If we accept this statement which was also confirmed by Rennell in the late eighteenth century it is impossible to think that the river in the early thirteenth century was flowing 25 miles west of Gaur. In that case we can not accept any other location of Nadia in the early thirteenth century.

IV

Before going on to the late fifteenth century Nadia, it is necessary to look briefly at some aspects of development on the western bank of the Bhagirathi River. In the late thirteenth century, when Balban was in Bengal in pursuit of a rebel, he had advised his son to conquer Satgaon which he could not do due to lack of time.[23] Satgaon was conquered in AD 1298 although the inscription does not mention Satgaon. It was the conquest of Tribeni from where Satgaon was only a few miles away. But the Turks did not then go towards the sea and it appears that lower Bengal enjoyed some sort of autonomy for the next few years. In the early fourteenth century Ghiyasuddin Tughluq divided Bengal into three administrative units comprising Sonargaon, Satgaon and Lakshmanavati. It seems that from the late thirteenth century at least Satgaon was on the south bank of the river Saraswati but whether it was a port, particularly for the overseas trade, there is some doubt. Niharranjan Ray's suggestion that in pre-medieval period Saraswati was the earlier bed of the Ganges has not yet been confirmed by anyone.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, Sultan Ilyas Shah transferred the capital to Pandua near Maldah and declared his independence from Delhi thus not only unifying the administration of Bengal but stopping the flow of funds from Bengal to Delhi. This must have given a boost to trade but as yet there is no evidence that Satgaon was acting as an overseas port of Bengal. Chittagong under the Bengal Sultans was still ruling the roost. This could be seen from the landing at Chittagong of four Chinese delegations during the first half of the fifteenth century while the envoys of the Bengal Sultans also departed from Chittagong. The description of Pandua by the last Chinese delegate Ma Huan[24] in AD 1433 showed it to be a flourishing city with walls and *hammams,* some of which are still in ruins. Ma Huan had landed at Chittagong and then took a boat to Sonargaon which, for sometimes, also acted as a port and from there left in a boat for Pandua. He stated that there are very big merchants in Bengal who owned big ships and trade in different parts of the world. But there is no mention of Satgaon. He was the first to

[23] See Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), History, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

[24] J. V. G. Mills (tr.& ed.), *Ma Huan*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 160-5.

mention the manufacture of silk from mulberry trees but he praised the manufacture of different kinds of cotton textile some of which he had named. There is no doubt that cotton textile is being exported in large quantities which was made possible by the introduction of spinning-wheel or *Charka* supposed to have been introduced in India by the middle of the fourteenth century according to Irfan Habib.[25] Although Ma Huan did not mention the spinning wheel, yet it may be presumed that by the early fifteenth century the production of cotton textile had improved tremendously due to the use of this machine. Obviously such increased production boosted the trade and commerce of the province.

It is generally assumed that during the fifties of the fifteenth century the capital was transferred from Pandua to Gaur. The Ganges must have been flowing past the western side of Gaur while the River Mahananda was gradually going away from Pandua. The late eighteenth century writer Ghulam Husain Salim[26] stated that during the early years of the fifteenth century there was increase in population in Gaur. Significantly we get the evidence of the rise of Satgaon as an overseas port around this time. An inscription of AD 1457 of the Sultan Nasiruddin Mahmud suggests its growing importance.[27] This was perhaps helped by the continuous trouble between Bengal, Tripura and Arakan, to be joined later by the Portuguese,[28] from the middle of the fifteenth century that resulted in the arrival of merchants to Satgaon from Chittagong. Evidently the waterway of the river Bhagirathi was getting important as carrier of trade and commerce. This development was supported by the towns emerging on the banks of the Bhagirathi which produced cotton, rice and sugar to supply the port. Among these one may mention Nadia, Santipur, Fulia, Khardaha, Katwa and others all adjacent to Satgaon.[29]

Such development of trade naturally increased the population and physical contour of Satgaon. The excellent description of the Bengali poet

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[25] Irfan Habib, *Technology in Medieval India, c. 650-c.1750*, Delhi, 2008, p. 38.

[26] Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riazu-s Salatin*, (tr. & ed. by Abdus Salam), Delhi, 1973, p. 118, reprint of 1st ed. of 1903. According to him, this occurred during the reign of Sultan Jalaluddin Shah.

[27] Aniruddha Ray, 'The Rise and Fall of Satgaon' in S. J. Stephen (ed.), *The Indian Trade at the Asian Frontier*, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 69-101.

[28] S. B. Qanungo, *A History of Chittagong*, Chittagong, 1988, vol. i.

[29] See the article of Aniruddha Ray entitled 'Transformation of Bengal Economy During the Fifteenth and the Sixteenth Centuries' in Perween Hasan and M. M. Islam (eds.), *Essays in Memory of Mamtazur Rahman Tarafdar*, Dhaka University, 1999, pp. 311-55.

Bipradas Piplai of Satgaon with rows of houses, temples and ships floating in the river Saraswati gives us an idea of the tremendous development of the commerce of Bengal so carefully described by the Venetian traveler Ludvico di Varthema[30] in 1505 and a few years later by the Portuguese merchant Duarte Barbosa.[31]

V

It has been stated earlier that the thirteenth century town of Nadia was located on the western bank of the river Bhagirathi and it was engulfed by the movement of the river perhaps from the late thirteenth century that continued for nearly one hundred years. It is presumed that this movement of the river has thrown up land on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi in which *"Char Nidaya"* continued to be marked in the maps of the early twentieth century.[32] Obviously such opening up of land on the bank of the Bhagirathi led to the settlements which became a small town during the second half of the fifteenth century AD. It may be noted here that the entire Nadia town of early thirteenth century has not been engulfed by the river since the Pancharatna temple has been found. Apart from that, many black basalt stone pillars, obviously of buildings of pre-Turkish period, have been found on the western bank and were used mostly in the Vaishnava monasteries and in some private houses.

The new town of Nadia that began to grow in the fifteenth century was located on the east bank of the river Bhagirathi. There is some controversy over the birth place of Sri Chaitanya and the location of Mayapur. We would not get into that controversy here. We would only try to see the morphology of the town which gradually began to grow for some time. The town was still located on the eastern bank in the second half of the sixteenth century when Mukundaram Chakrabarty[33] mentioned it as such between AD 1594 and 1603. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Krishnaram Das in his poem *'Sitala Mangal'* has kept it on the eastern bank of the river.[34] However, it seems that the river was moving slightly to the east leaving some areas in its western bank where settlement started taking place. In the second half of the eighteenth century AD, James Rennell had found Nadia town occupying

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[30] J. W. Jones (ed.), *The Itinerary of Ludvico di Varthema*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 97, reprint.

[31] M. L. Dames (tr. & ed.), *The Book of Duarte Barbosa,* New Delhi, 1989, 2 vols., vol. ii, pp. 134-47, reprint.

[32] See the map facing p. 16 in Saradindu Ray (ed.), *Chitre Nabadwip* (Bengali), Calcutta, *Gourabda* 496.

[33] Mukundaram Chakrabarty, *Kavi Kankan Chandi* (Bengali), Allahabad, 1929, p. 200.

[34] Satyendranath Bhattacharjya (ed.), *Sitala Mangal* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1958.

both banks of the river, although the German priest Joseph Tieffenthaler[35] did not specifically mention it. He had visited Nadia. The river was obviously moving in both directions, and after some time that created new settlements and migration of population.

The growth of urban areas would suggest intensive building activities apart from the increase of other crafts. This would mean the concentration of artisans at particular places like Nadia which fast developed into a town. There is no reference to any mosque at Nadia although, as we would see later, there were Muslims including the Qazi and the Kotwal living in the town. Satgaon was the administrative centre of the area in which the town of Nadia is situated. The artisans were of both the communities. Unfortunately we do not have any evidence of their remuneration. The mid-fourteenth century Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta[36] visiting Sonargaon and Sylhet had given a list of prices prevailing, which he considered much lower than those prevailing at Delhi. He had also recorded the statement of his friend living there for some time that a family of four could subsist only with a few rupees a month. Abul Fazl[37] had given the scale of remuneration of skilled and unskilled labourers obviously prevailing in the Agra region. The prices in Bengal seem to be lower but the remuneration was also lower than that prevailing in northern India. Ibn Battuta stated that people told him that the prices prevailing in Bengal at that time was far higher than they could afford. A Dutch traveller[38] had mentioned some remuneration of skilled workers at Hooghly in mid-seventeenth century which seems to be higher than mentioned by Abul Fazl. Obviously the Dutch were paying higher wages but it suggests that the price was rising in Bengal along with the increase in remuneration.

One may perhaps bring the question of the existence of the middle class in the medieval period. Francois Bernier, the mid-seventeenth century French traveller propounded the thesis that there was no middle class in India which has been effectively challenged by Iqtedar Alam Khan in 1975

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[35] Joseph Tieffenthaler, *Description Historique et Geographique d l'Inde* (tr. from German into French by Johann Bernoulli), Berlin, 1796, 2 vols., vol. i, pp. 453-4.

[36] H. A. R. Gibb (tr. & ed.), *Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, Delhi, 1986, reprint of 1st ed. of 1929, p. 267. See also discussion by Nirode Bhusan Ray in Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *History, op. cit.*, pp. 100-03.

[37] Abul Fazl, *The Ain-i Akbari* (tr. by Jarret & annotated by Jadunath Sarkar), The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1993, 3 vols. reprint, vol. ii for the *Subah* of Bengal.

[38] Gautier Schouten, *Voiage Dans Indes Orientales, 1658-1660* (tr. from the Dutch into French), Amsterdam, 1707, pp. 155-6.

and much earlier by M.R. Tarafdar in Bengal.[39] If we include well-to-do teachers, small government employees and petty businessmen and traders then we may suggest that some middle class people were there at Nadia. We would see later that the existence of this class was not extensive and only a small portion existed. There were only two government servants referred at Nadia in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. But the description of the house of the Qazi would suggest that he was neither poor nor rich, since he had only two guards at the gate. Besides, there were teachers at Nadia who had houses and attached halls where they teach twice a day. They were not poor, but not very rich either. These would exclude rich merchants living in luxury in big houses as well as very poor who live in huts. It may be presumed that some elements of middle class were emerging at Nadia by early sixteenth century, if not earlier.

The first description of Nadia on the western bank is available from one of the early Vaishnava writer Vrindaban Das.[40] He shows the contrast in the character of the town after the birth of Chaitanya (AD 1476) by describing the atmosphere of the town before the advent of Chaitanya. He stated that there were many rich people, obviously merchants, who used to enjoy life with wine and meat. They had their festivals of songs and dances. There were also some teachers of Sanskrit and Philosophy including *Navya Nyay* who used to have students coming from all over the country. Why the merchants settled at Nadia and spent money there is not clear. But it seems that the town had some commercial aspects perhaps related to the manufacture of cotton to be supplied to Satgaon in the wake of the revival of trade and commerce. Actually the early thirteenth century Nadia was an opulent commercial town and it took the army of Bakhtyar three days to loot it. Minhaj said that each soldier got so much booty that he could not describe it. Obviously it was a wealthy town with many wealthy people although the merchants had fled earlier. Such kind of plunder of Nadia could also be seen at the end of the seventeenth century when the troops of Rahim Khan, the rebel, plundered Nadia. Had it been merely a university-town with teachers and students, the troops of Rahim Khan would not have bothered to come there in the first place. By that time they had plundered wealthy towns of north Bengal including the port of Hooghly. We would

[39] Iqtedar Alam Khan, 'The Middle Class in the Mughal Empire' in *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1975, Aligarh session (Address of the President of Medieval India Section). Mamtazur Rahman Tarafdar had postulated in his book *Husain Shahi Bengal* (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1965, pp. 159-60) that middle class was emerging in Bengal during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century AD.

[40] Vrindaban Das, *Chaitanya Bhagavat* (Bengali), Nabadwip, 479 *Gourabda*, pp. 74-5.

discuss it later. One can, therefore, suggest that the town of Nadia in the seventeenth century at least was a wealthy city. The mid-seventeenth century French traveller Tavernier who visited Nadia stated that it was a large town.[41] The question is how or from where this wealth was coming. We would discuss this later.

The modern historian Rama Prasad Chanda in a lecture stated that the house of Chaitanya was in the south of Ganganagar.[42] We would come to the morphology of the town later. Like many other towns of medieval India, Nadia grew up on the bank of the river. We know of at least three rows of streets running parallel to the river. These streets were criss-crossed by small winding lanes in one of which Chaitanya got lost in his boyhood.[43] Through these lanes one could reach the heart of the city. These streets had rows of houses of individuals perhaps only on one side. On the street closest to the river from the east, the first house was the cottage of Shukla Brahmachari followed by the one of Gadadhar Pundit. The next one belonged to Sanjay Mukund who had a *Chandi Mandap* attached to his house where he used to teach every morning and afternoon. The next one was that of Murari Gupta who was once the private physician of the Sultan. In the second street the people coming from Cuttack had settled and in the third street the people from Sylhet had their houses.[44] The settlement of the second and the third street would suggest that people who had come from the same area tend to live together giving an impression of a closed locality which is not there in the street close to the river. The exclusiveness of settlement often created problems. Chaitanya had a quarrel once with the people of Cuttack living in the second street. They had complained to the Kotwal (probably a Muslim appointed by the government) who called Chaitanya to the Police Station and warned him. There were open drains in front of the houses perhaps for carrying water to the river. In his early days Chaitanya once fell into one of them. One, therefore, observes some attempt of sanitation. The link between the houses and the drains was done perhaps by sun baked pipes the evidence of which had been found at Gaur, not far from the palace.

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[41] Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India* (tr. by V. Ball) Delhi, 1977, 2 vols, reprint, vol. i, p. 108.

[42] Rama Prasad Chanda, 'Sri Chaitanya's Birth Place' in *Chitre Nabadwip, op. cit.*, pp. 143-6 (publication of his lecture at Gauriya Math, Calcutta).

[43] Vrindaban Das, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109. Actually two miscreants abducted Chaitanya when he was a child.

[44] Jayananda, *Chaitanya Mangal*, B. B. Majumdar & S. Mukhopadhyay (eds.), The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 11 & 78; Vrindaban Das, *op. cit.* p. 130.

The father of Chaitanya, Jagannath Mishra, used to live with his family at Cuttack long before the birth of Chaitanya. There were some troubles at Cuttack in which perhaps he was involved and about which we do not have any evidence. He, however, left Cuttack with his family for Sylhet. According to Jayananda, writing around AD 1563,[45] there were the oppressions at Sylhet of the Muslim administration. But he emphasized that a terrible famine led Jagannath Mishra to leave Sylhet to come to Nadia. It seems that other people from Sylhet had already come to Nadia.[46] The oppression of the Muslim government may be one of the reasons, but that does not explain the arrival of the people of Cuttack then being ruled by a Hindu king.

It appears that Mishra was a wealthy man. He had a big house with high walls, a very big doorway and several rooms around a courtyard. One presumes that this kind of housing was not unfamiliar at Nadia. Jayananda had suggested that the merchants had walled houses with big doorways.[47] Taking all these into considerations one may suggest that Nadia had developed into a town around the middle of the fifteenth century and it continued to develop in the next century. Therefore, the purpose of arrival of these people at Nadia was not only to live next to Bhagirathi for religious reasons or to learn Sanskrit, but also to improve their income. There was a commercial element embedded in the manufacture of cotton textile, the overseas export trade of which continued to rise at least till the third decade of the sixteenth century. Therefore, one would look for two parallel but contradictory forces running at Nadia. The commercial aspect of Nadia is often overlooked since the movement of Chaitanya had given Nadia a new height of prosperity which also seems to contradict its earlier orthodox brahmanical religious stand. The emphasis of Chaitanya was to neglect the ritual thus eliminating the brahmin priests and to substitute it by singing together the songs of God. However, there was one aspect which did not go against the brahmin orthodox system. He emphasised on the study of the text, the philosophy and the ancient learning of the brahmins. There the two contrasting forces of religion met at a higher level and it is no wonder that among the disciples of Chaitanya the brahmins formed the largest group.[48] Therefore, it may not be correct to say that Chaitanya was totally against the brahmins. He was against the rituals but not against its philosophy.

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[45] Editors of *Chaitanya Mangal* placed the date of the writing as 1550 as its upper limit and a few years later than 1538 as the lower limit.

[46] Jayananda, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

[47] *Ibid*, p.12, Mishra had come from Sylhet to Nadia with his friends in a palanquin (p. 11).

[48] Ramakanta Chakrabarty, 'Madhyayuger Banglay Vaishnava Dharma O Tar Prabhab' in Aniruddha Ray & Ratnabali Chattopadhyay (eds.), *Madhyayuger Banglar Samaj O Sanskrti*, Calcutta, 1992, pp. 141-70 (Bengali).

VI

Chaitanya (born in AD 1476) started teaching from an early age. In his boyhood days he used to go with his friends to the river and cross it by swimming. Like many other companions, he used to take his bath daily at the Bhagirathi which seems to be not far from his house.[49] One may suggest that this distance could be of half a mile or so from his house. He used to take his students to see the town and we have a description of his going to the north-eastern edge of the town where poor artisans used to live. He went to visit each one of them by turn.[50] There were also the milk-men whose cows used to graze in the fields beyond the quarter of the artisans. Beyond the field where Chaitanya often used to go in the afternoon there were three villages. Beyond these three villages was flowing the river Jalangi which was not mentioned by the Vaishnava writers. Perhaps in the eighteenth century this river came much closer to Nadia since it was moving towards the north-west. The map of James Rennell shows this junction between the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi in the north of Nadia which meant that Jalangi had been slowly moving towards the north-west of the town of Nadia. But by then the river Bhagirathi was moving further west leaving areas in the eastern bank where people began to settle. The description of the poet Karnapur in his drama written in 1572 showed Nadia on the east bank of the Bhagirathi River.[51] But the movement of the Bhagirathi was a bit erratic. After some time it continued to move towards the east and in 1784 James Rennell had shown Nadia on both sides of the Bhagirathi. Till the end of the seventeenth century the river continued to move gradually towards the west.

The placid life of Nadia was often disturbed by political upheavals. The Vaishnava writer Jayananda has narrated an incident which perhaps occurred during the early 1490's, during the rule of the last Abyssinian king before the take over of Alauddin Husain Shah in 1493-94. The astrologers predicted to this Abyssinian Sultan that the next Sultan would be a brahmin from Nadia. The Sultan sent people to catch the young brahmin children and many people left the town. Perhaps this attempt did not last.[52] Again, there was a village called Pir Ali (now named Parulia) in the north-west of Nadia town which was dominated by the Muslims. It is stated that there were frequent troubles between the people of Nadia and those of Pir Ali.[53] The reason of the trouble is not known.

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[49] Rama Prasad Chanda, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-7.
[50] Vrindaban Das, *op cit.*, pp. 237-8.
[51] Quoted in the article of Rama Prasad Chanda entitled "Location of Nabadwip during the time of Chaitanya" in *Chitre Nabadwip*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-42.
[52] Jayananda, *op. cit*, p. 14
[53] *Ibid.*

There were four bathing places with paved steps called *Ghats* in the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi in front of the town. The one at the end in the east was called *Ghat* of Chaitanya since he used to take his bath at this place daily. Later on this was called the *Ghat* of the Lord. Rama Prasad Chanda had suggested that the house of the parents of Chaitanya was located on the north of this Ghat. He had also suggested that the Ghats were not much distant from each other. Even till the middle of the seventeenth century tide used to come with force to Nadia which has been testified by the mid-seventeenth century French traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier.[54] Churamani Das, a Vaishnava poet of mid-sixteenth century stated that the tide used to come with such a force that both banks of the Bhagirathi used to get flooded near Nadia. Even the cows and other domestic animals were often taken away by the flood.[55]

The house of the parents of Chaitanya has already been described above. It appears in the writings of Jayananda. Most of the houses in the town were built of brick. These were all one storied while some houses had high walls and painted doors of huge sizes. There is no reference to two-storied buildings and we do not have any such reference at Gaur as well, the then capital of Bengal. Jayananda further stated that goods of Varanasi, Kanchipuram, Kashmir and Bhutan were sold on the streets of Nadia by peddlers.[56] These were probably coming to Satgaon from both the north and south India from where the dealers would send their people to these small towns for sale. Perhaps they did not want to invest to build permanent shops. But it would suggest that there were rich and upper middle class people who would buy those goods. There is, therefore, a commercial aspect of the town which had attracted rich people, possibly merchants. The problem here is that we do not have any reference to markets in Nadia. Since there was no surrounding wall at Nadia there was no entry or exit tax on goods. There was obviously a closer connection with neighbouring villages from where food used to come to the town. The problem is where these goods would be assembled. In cities wholesale markets grew up often outside the city from where these were distributed inside the city in different markets. But no such evidence of the existence of wholesale market has been found so far in case of Nadia. Perhaps there were weekly open markets called *Hats* to dispose of these goods. But it seems that in each locality of the town there was a

[54] Tavernier, *op. cit*, vol. i, p. 108

[55] Churamani Das, *Gauranga Vijaya*, (ed. by Sukumar Sen), The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1957, p. 33 (Bengali).

[56] Jayananda, *op. cit*, p. 12.

grocer's shop which used to deal with these goods. In the list of artisans living at the edge of the town of Nadia, which we would see later, there is no mention of grocer or oil-man, two necessary people found in almost all the villages and towns of India.

VII

We may now have a brief look at the inside structure of the town of Nadia. Unfortunately there are very few evidences of the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth century to show the features of the town. Vrindaban Das, while describing the conflict between Chaitanya and the Qazi had given the route of the procession taken by Chaitanya to the house of the Qazi and beyond.[57]

In another place the poet had described the visit of Chaitanya to the quarter of the artisans at the edge of the town with his students.[58] While the first one takes the ring road, so to speak, the second one was from the middle of the town where Chaitanya used to teach. Unfortunately the second route has not been described. Both these routes, however, do not speak of any building inside the town. Jayananda, as stated earlier, narrated that there were many ponds and temples inside the town apart from brick-built houses of the rich with high walls and painted doorways. Around AD 1617, Krishnadas Kaviraj had given a description of the meeting between the Qazi and Chaitanya.[59] But the meeting, supposedly held in an atmosphere of amicable conversation, was in total contrast to the spectre of violence as presented by Vrindaban Das. The incident of the meeting cannot, therefore, be taken as historical reality. But for our purpose the route described by Vrindaban gives us a glimpse of the structure of the town of Nadia. It may be mentioned that the places narrated by Vrindaban have been confirmed by the Mouza map of 1917. We may, therefore, give a summary of the description of the route as stated by Vrindaban Das.

Chaitanya and his followers were holding music sessions with instruments often throughout the night. The local brahmins felt disturbed and complained to the Qazi who visited the place and forbade Chaitanya to have such songs (*Sangkirtan* in Bengali). Chaitanya decided to punish the Qazi and proclaimed that he would take a procession to the house of the Qazi after sunset. On the appointed evening Chaitanya led a procession with lighted torches first going round the four *Ghats* and then finally starting

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[57] Vrindaban Das, *op. cit,* pp. 802-4.

[58] *Ibid*, pp. 236-7.

[59] Krishnadas Kaviraj, *Chaitanya Charitamrita* (Bengali), Calcutta, 9th Basumati edition, 1993, pp. 72-3.

from the *Ghat* of the Lord. Obviously this was done to attract people to the procession and it may be surmised that the brahmins must have joined the procession to see the fun. After all, in case of the defeat of either, they were not going to lose anything.

The procession ran parallel to the river for some time and then took the route towards Ganganagar in the north which also seems to be the outer ring road of the town. After going on for some time the procession turned right at a junction called Simulia for the direct approach to the house of the Qazi.[60] This house was a big one with sprawling gardens full of fruit bearing trees. There were two guards at the gate. Chaitanya was at the end of the procession and it seems from subsequent events that the first few rows of the procession were occupied by younger people–perhaps students. On the approach of the procession the guards fled and the Qazi immediately locked the door inside his house. The youngsters then vandalized the garden even climbing the trees and breaking the branches. While this was going on Chaitanya brought along the rear of the procession. Learning that the Qazi had locked himself inside the house he wanted to burn the house killing the Qazi and his family. Some of his friends, however, persuaded him not to try this because the Sultan would then take revenge for the killing of the Qazi. After this the procession dispersed.

It is significant that the Kotwal did not make any intervention although he must have been aware of the procession. It is also not clear where the two guards had fled. It is expected that they had gone to the Kotwal for reporting the attack on the house. The inaction of the Kotwal could be explained by the presumption that there was no love left between the Kotwal and the Qazi. Qazi, as would happen in other places in northern India, belonged to *Shurfa* or the intellectuals who did not favour the Kotwal. The other reason might be, as stated by Krishnadas Kaviraj, that the Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah had forbidden the Kotwal or others to touch Chaitanya.[61] Obviously he wanted to take advantage of the internal bickering within the Hindu society in which the domination of the brahmins would be reduced.

Since the Qazi had locked himself in his room, the processionists dispersed. Chaitanya then moved forward by the same street to reach the next locality called Mollapara,[62] where some Muslims used to live. It was

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[60] Rama Prasad Chanda has identified this Qazi as Maulana Sirajuddin and his tomb is stated to be located at Bamanpukur, north of the town (*see* his article on Birth Place of Chaitanya, *op. cit*, p. 148). No evidence has been cited in support of these identifications.

[61] Krishnadas Kaviraj, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-01. It seems that this order was given after the incident of the Qazi.

[62] For the visit of Chaitanya after the incident with the Qazi to the quarter of artisans, see Vrindaban Das, *op. cit*, pp. 806-09.

flanked by a wine shop. It is strange that the Muslims did not try to rescue the Qazi. It is also not clear why the Muslims were living there. Probably they were tailors and some of them might have been manufacturing leather bags for carrying sugar to distant places. Chaitanya then moved on to the area of conch-shell workers. Chaitanya must have known them since he had taken his students there earlier as stated by Vrindaban Das elsewhere. After this there were several families of milk-men whose cows used to graze in the field next to their quarter. Chaitanya used to come to this field in the afternoon. He then moved on to the locality of the weavers, gardeners and to the locality of perfume sellers. After this he met a friend there in his cottage who used to earn his livelihood by selling straw. He then returned to his house.

It seems that the artisans were living at the edge of the town since they belonged to low caste. But there is no mention of *Malangis* or salt manufacturers referred by late sixteenth century poet Mukundaram Chakrabarty.[63] It is also significant that there is no mention of carpenters and masons. It may be presumed that the town was procuring salt from outside. It is almost certain, given the large number of brick houses with big wooden doors, that the carpenters and masons were living within the town. But the existence of perfume sellers and manufacturers would suggest a certain urban life in the town which was probably attracting wealthy people. Some of these artisans were mentioned by the contemporary writers like Basudeb Ghosh[64] with reference to Satgaon which was a big city then. Evidently there were rich people at Nadia but it seems that a middle class was emerging in this brahmin dominated town.

The principal problem of any medieval town is to procure food from the countryside. Since Nadia did not have any wall it may be presumed that it had close relationship with the neighbouring villages. The Vaishnavas took advantage of this closeness by preparing vegetarian food items as part of their lifestyle of which we have some descriptions from the contemporary Vaishnava writers. It may be noted that in those items of milk products, sugar and molasses formed important elements. This is important because at that time the price of sugar in north India was very high and Bengal used to supply sugar in leather bags to those areas.[65] Therefore, there was increase in production of sugarcane in Bengal as witnessed by an anonymous

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[63] Mukundaram Chakrabarty, *Kavi Kankan Chandi*, Allahabad, 1929, pp. 90-91, 2nd ed. (Bengali).

[64] Description given in the article of Manaswita Sanyal 'Saptagram, c. 1300-1632' (Bengali) in *Aitihasik*, Calcutta, 1997, pp. 17-21.

[65] See the article of Irfan Habib entitled 'Agrarian Economy' (north India during the Sultanate period) in *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Tapan Raychaudhuri & Irfan Habib (eds.), Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1982, 2 vols. vol. i , pp. 48-75.

Portuguese in AD 1521, not far from Chittagong, then under the control of the Bengal Sultan.[66] He found that not only jungle was there on one bank of the narrow river, the other bank was producing sugarcane. One might say that there was a spurt in production of market commodities like sugar, cotton and silk and also of essential food items like rice. The smaller towns like Nadia, Santipur, Fulia etc. took advantage of the production which was obviously exported outside through the port of Satgaon.

The description of Jayananda, referred earlier, suggested this kind of liaison between these smaller towns and the outside world. It has been seen earlier that he had mentioned the existence of brick-built houses with high walls and painted wooden doors. He also stated that the products of Kanchipuram, Kashmir, Varanasi and Bhutan were on sale at Nadia. These were taken by the peddlers round the town which were purchased by the inhabitants. In that case one may visualize the existence of a prosperous middle class whose tastes for urban lifestyle are increasing. One may presume that these products were brought to Satgaon and then distributed to these towns by the big dealers who did not want to invest money on establishing shops. This may further suggest that such a system used to run on sporadically and was uncertain with little consistency. But to cater to the tastes of the rich people and urban middle class, various kinds of artisans and smaller merchants would flock at these towns. It is significant that Chaitanya had generally wondered around these smaller towns like Santipur and Katwa. He did not go to the big cities like Gaur or to the villages. The closest to a big city like Gaur that he had gone once was to the village of Ramkeli where Sanatan, the minister of the Sultan Alauddin Husain Shah met him at night. But there is hardly any reference to the peasant or to village in the contemporary Vaishnava literature. In one village he met the *Shiqdar*,[67] who was the administrative head of the area. But there is very little reference of him in the contemporary Vaishnava literature. This official became Faujdar later under the Mughals. Even there is not much reference to the Kotwal in the Vaishnava literature. Chaitanya had gone to these small towns obviously to propagate among the artisans and the merchants some of whom allegedly became Vaishnavas later. The emphasis of Chaitanya that the salvation was possible by uttering the song of God must have appealed to both artisans and the merchants, who might be rich but socially under the

[66] G. Bouchon & L. F. Thomaz (tr. & eds.), *Voyage Dans les Deltas du Gange et de l' Irradouddy*, Paris, 1988, pp. 316 *ff*. He also spoke highly of cotton production.

[67] Vrindaban Das referred to *Shiqdar* in Bengal as a judge (*op. cit*, pp. 119-21). Irfan Habib stated that during the fourteenth century *Shiqdar* was in charge of large areas and they were to collect revenue from the area known as *Shiq* (*Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Oxford University Press, 2000, 2nd revised ed., pp. 318-19).

control of the brahmins. Thus the preaching of Chaitanya, in a smaller sense, was against the basic rule of the caste system and was against the domination of the brahmin priests, a section of whom survives on elaborate and expensive rituals. How far he was successful is a different question, but it certainly gave a boost to the morale of the lower castes in those smaller towns.

According to Ramakanta Chakrabarty, the brahmins formed the majority of the followers of Chaitanya despite his preaching against the priestly class. It may be presumed that after the victory of Chaitanya over the Qazi of Nadia the brahmins must have considered him as their saviour from the oppression of the Qazi, the proverbial villain of the medieval Bengali literature. But the medieval Bengali writers like Mukundaram or Bharat Chandra had made a distinction between the brahmins who only read sacred texts and the brahmins who did *jajmani*. Mukundaram considered the latter as inferior.[68] The poet had clearly shown that there was no one brahmin class of equal rank. It is possible that some disgruntled brahmins had joined Chaitanya after his victory over the Qazi.

VIII

During the first half of the sixteenth century Satgaon port was facing problem as the water of the Saraswati was flowing through the Hooghly River. It was not silting as alleged by some writers. As a result the big Portuguese ships were anchoring at Bettore, opposite Howrah, and transferred their goods to smaller boats to transport these to Satgaon.[69] Towards the end of the 1530's, Gaur was twice attacked by Sher Shah and then it was occupied by Humayun. After his defeat, Sher Shah again occupied Gaur while the king of Orissa briefly occupied Satgaon. Around 1565, Suleiman Kararani occupied Gaur and transferred the capital to Tanda on the opposite bank of the river. His son Daud Kararani was defeated by the Mughal general Munim Khan who, first took the capital to Gaur but after a severe plague transferred the capital to Tanda. In 1594, Raja Man Singh, the new Subadar of Bengal transferred the capital to Rajmahal from where it was transferred to Dacca around 1610. The period of the sixteenth century was, therefore, a period of turmoil and disturbances.

It appears, however, that the town of Nadia was not much disturbed. The recite of the poet Jayananda seen earlier suggests a flourishing condition of Nadia town. One reason of such normalcy at Nadia may be that the smaller towns were not much disturbed. The reason may be that with the turmoil at

[68] Mukundaram, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-7. Also see Bharat Chandra Ray, *Annada Mangal* (Bengali), Basumati ed. 1929, pp. 12-14.

[69] See the account of Caesar Fredericki in *Purchas and His Pilgrimages*, 1911, Edinburgh ed., vol. v, p. 410.

the capital there was decentralization in the lower part of the river where internal trade had continued. The foundation of Hooghly port in 1579 did not immediately solve the problem but it is possible that the merchants and traders had shifted to these smaller towns after the overseas port of Satgaon had ceased to operate. They perhaps continued to supply the products of these smaller towns to the Portuguese for their export trade. After 1632, the Mughals had driven the Portuguese away from Hooghly port[70] but by then it seems that the commercial nature of the town of Nabadwip was changing. With the arrival of the English and the Dutch at Hughli in the middle of the seventeenth century we hear of the town of Nabadwip or Nadia as a center of Vaishnava movement and a place of learning Sanskrit, logic and philosophy. The travellers who came in the second half of the seventeenth century hardly spoke of the town of Nadia.

From 1696, the revolt of Sobha Singh and Rahim Khan[71] had engulfed the whole of northern Bengal. The rebels had plundered certain towns like Mukhsudabad, Maldah and Rajmahal and began to demand taxes even from the three European Companies. The Faujdar of Jessore, Zabardast Khan, son of the Subadar Ibrahim Khan, had defeated the rebels at the battle of Bhagawangola and the rebels began to settle at Burdwan. This was the period when the new Subadar prince Azimushan had arrived as Subadar of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. At the end of 1696 the French Father Pierre Martin had gone to settle at Nadia to learn Sanskrit. After some time he heard that the rebels are coming to plunder Nadia and he immediately left for Balassore. From there on 31 January 1697, he wrote a letter explaining his reason for coming to Balasore.[72] There is no contemporary source on the plunder of Nadia by the rebels. Much later in 1753, the poet Bharat Chandra Ray wrote in his poem *Annada Mangal* that the zamindar of Nadia, Krishna Chandra Ray, had defeated and had driven away the rebel, Sobha Singh, from Nadia. There is no record in any contemporary English or French letters of the exploit of the zamindar of Nadia. It is, however, significant that Jahangir, after his accession in 1605 had given two *Farmans* to the zamindar Krishna Chandra Ray where this exploit has not been mentioned.[73] Unless more

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[70] For the history of Hughli, see Aniruddha Ray, 'The City of Hughli from the late 16th to early 18th century' in *Modern Historical Studies* (Rabindra Bharati University), March 2011-12, vol. 7, pp. 1-28.

[71] For the activities of the rebels, see Aniruddha Ray, *Adventurers, Landowners and Rebels, Bengal, c. 1575- c. 1715*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 117-61.

[72] *Ibid,* p. 153

[73] Bharat Chandra Ray, *op. cit,* p. 115. For the *Farmans,* see Kumud Nath Mullick, *Nadia Kahini* (Bengali), Calcutta, 1986.

sources are available it is not possible to accept or to reject the statement of Bharat Chandra Ray.

The rebellion had dislocated many people, particularly rich, who had migrated with their treasure to Calcutta and Chandernagore. It is possible that some of the middle class and poor people had migrated to smaller towns in both parts of the Bhagirathi. Around that time it seems there was a change in the movement of the river Bhagirathi in front of Nadia. The river had gradually begun to move towards the east leaving some land on the western bank. It is possible that many people migrating from other places had begun to settle on the western bank. It is to be mentioned that James Rennell in 1784 mentioned Nadia on both banks of the Bhagirathi. By this time the river Jalangi was advancing from the east to the north-west of the three villages namely Gadigacha, Pardanga and Majda. The Vaishnava writers had mentioned that Chaitanya used to visit these three villages but they did not refer to the river Jalangi. This river finally met the Bhagirathi on the north-west of Nadia which limited the boundary of the town of Nadia in the north. Such movement of the river might explain why the town of Nadia could not expand as it is surrounded by rivers almost on all four sides making it an island. This must have limited the migration of population in the town.

One may speculate on the number of people living at Nadia in different times. It seems that the thirteenth century Nadia was a smaller but a prosperous town. As stated earlier, it was located on the western bank of the river Bhagirathi and it had a surrounding wall with a gateway guarded by troops. The distance from the gate to the royal palace seems to be of half a mile or so, and the river seems to be behind the palace while the gate is in the north-west of the palace. Beyond the wall, in the north slightly towards the east, was the jungle where Bakhtyar had concealed his main troops. Obviously the wall had prevented any contact between the town and the jungle so that the position of the troops could not be revealed earlier. It also appears that the jungle was a bit distant from the gate because the guards of the gate could not see the main army emerging from the jungle in time to get ready for the resistance. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that the town was an oblong one, slightly long, going along the river but expands towards the east.

The town seems to be half a mile long from outer gate to the palace and about two miles broad–an oblong shape. Accepting this configuration it would be normal to think that the population would not be more than three thousand including women and children. It may be mentioned that there were no troops in the town. Perhaps they had gone to defend the Teliaghari pass–the usual gateway to Bengal from Bihar. As seen earlier the Brahmins and the rich merchants had already left the town. But this number could be

less if we accept that there were temples and perhaps ponds inside the town. The finding of very big black basalt stone pillars on the western bank would suggest such a possibility.

The late fifteenth century town of Nadia was located on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi since in the intervening period the river had engulfed much of the town on the western bank which was naturally deserted by the inhabitants. As indicated earlier, such inundations had also occurred in case of Lakshmanavati and Satgaon and in both these places, practically nothing had been found except a ruined mosque at the western end of Satgaon. The movement of the river Bhagirathi to the west had thrown up land in the eastern bank which was gradually filled up by people. This process must have started towards the end of the thirteenth century, and by the end of the fourteenth century the eastern bank was well populated. This was also the period of the independent Sultans under whom the commercial prosperity of western Bengal was increasing rapidly. Nadia was becoming a centre of learning by the second half of the fifteenth century and students from all over India used to come there. It is an enigma that the poet Kirtibas, living not far from Nadia on the opposite side of the river, did not go to Nadia for study and he preferred to go to north Bengal.[74] But people from Orissa and Sylhet used to settle at Nadia during the late fifteenth century. It is difficult to find out the number of people living then at Nadia. There was a floating population since the students would go back to their homes after finishing their studies. There was no surrounding wall at Nadia and one may speculate that there was good contact between the towns-people and the villagers nearby. By the first half of the sixteenth century the boundaries of the town of Nadia were more or less fixed. The river forms the boundary on the south. The quarters of the artisans, the vacant field and the three villages mentioned earlier formed eastern boundary. On the north, Simulia and the street leading to the house of the Qazi formed the boundary and on the west, there was the street that the procession of Chaitanya had taken to, where the Bhagirathi was gradually shifting. Given this configuration, one may presume that the town was nearly three miles in breadth, from the east to west. That this was not a mere surmise could be seen from the observation of the late eighteenth century German priest Joseph Tiefenthaeler. He recorded the area of the town as two and half miles in breadth but did not give its length. In the Mouza map of 1917, referred earlier, it seems that the length and breadth of the town was almost equal. It may be stated that the contour of the town did not change much after the eighteenth century. One may, therefore, presume that the number of people of the town in the late

[74] See the discussion in Aniruddha Ray 'Kavi Kirtibas O Gaur Darbar' (Bengali) in *Itihas Anusandhan*, Calcutta, published in 2013, pp. 223-31.

eighteenth century was nearly five thousand, almost double the figure of that of the thirteenth century Nadia. It may be mentioned that by the end of the eighteenth century situation had changed very much. The rise of Calcutta as a port-town and the assumption of the Dewani by the English in 1765 had led to the migration of merchants from Satgaon, Hooghly, Murshidabad and other places to Calcutta. This actually created problem for the small towns on the Bhagirathi as the investment was drained off. It may be mentioned that the same German priest stated that the condition of the brahmins at Nadia had deteriorated. This is obviously because the moneyed people, the merchants had gone elsewhere and under the patronage of the English rulers there was greater emphasis on English education which the Hindus eagerly grasped.

Actually it seems that some problems had emerged in the traditional social structure of Nadia during the second half of the seventeenth century. The English Company merchant Streynsham Mater wrote in his diary that a brahmin of Nadia had come to him to sell some cloth.[75] It is not clear whether he had purchased it, but it certainly shows that the old social structure was not functioning on earlier lines. It also shows that brahmins were not getting as many students as earlier they used to and the production of the town was not getting the market it desired. Needless to say, that the entire social structure was not affected. The two forces operating at Nadia since the late fifteenth century were still operating, but their scales had decreased leading to deteriorating condition of certain group of inhabitants. This was a period when the European companies were gradually increasing their investments and the Indian merchants were trying to have access to these companies to get the contracts for supplying their goods.

Therefore, the history of the town of Nadia is very much connected to its location and morphology and is very much dependent on the movement of the rivers like the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi. Nearly five hundred years of the history of the small town of Nadia is very much influenced by the movement of the river Bhagirathi, by the migration of the artisans and other people from outside, as well as by the policy of the government. An attempt has been made in this article to look at these linkages. Furthermore, local history does not mean that its relationships with places far and near would not be looked into on the assumption that these did not affect that local history. The case of Nadia amply justifies that.

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[75] Streynsham Mater, *The Diaries, 1675-1680* (ed. by R. C. Temple), London, 1911, 2 vols, vol. i, p. 48.

The Position of Zamindars under The *Nizamat* in Bengal

MUNSHI MAZIBAR RAHMAN

The zamindars played a very crucial part in the political and social sustenance of the Mughal power. They formed an important stratum in the structural base of the Empire. The Mughals adopted a unique policy of accommodating the zamindars in various branches of administration by giving them employment in the hierarchy of functions. So powerful was the base of this class that the Mughals had to keep a close and constant watch over it to prevent it from becoming an insurmountable threat to the state.

The emergence of Bengal as a semi-independent principality under Murshid Quli Khan and his successors, coincided with the emergence of a powerful group of zamindars, merchants, bankers and insulated Mughal officials to form, even though for a transitional period, a 'regionally oriented ruling group'[1] in the province. Of all these groups and power-blocs, the zamindars, by far exerted maximum influence and authority in the body-politic of Bengal. Starting from their primary functions, i.e. revenue collections, the zamindars in Bengal, treaded equally in the political, social as also the administrative front.

Zamindar is a very perplexing term, having a wide spectrum of definitions, based on the rights enjoyed by various persons. The term was in use even before the advent of the Mughals,[2] but the term began frequently to be used in the seventeenth century. Zamindar literally means a holder or a keeper of land. A person while employed his own resources and labour and brought a piece of land under cultivation had *malikana* right over that piece of land and was recognized as zamindar. Again *madad-i-mash* grants also, in course of time, assumed the character of zamindari rights.[3] The zamindari rights, therefore, connoted 'a variety of superior rights in the land or its usufruct', with any hereditary claim to a direct share of the peasant's produce. But

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[1] P. B. Calkins, 'The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, (1700-1740)', *Journal of Asian Studies,* vol. 24, August 1970, pp. 799-807.

[2] Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India,* Volume I: *c.* 1200-*c.* 1750, New Delhi, 1984, (reprint), p. 244.

[3] S. Nurul Hasan, *Thoughts on Agrarian Relations on Mughal India*, Delhi, 1983 (reprint), pp. 18-20.

that did not necessarily mean ownership of land.[4] As per Mughal tradition, zamindar became a generic title replacing the old local terms like *khot, muqaddam, satarhi, biswi, bhomia*, etc.[5] and embracing people from different strata of the ruling hierarchy – from *rajas, ranas, rais* to *khots, muqaddams, chaudhuris*, etc.[6] The underlying principle was, perhaps, to introduce a further degree of uniformity by recognising certain aspects of zamindari rights and to mould all the different holders of land into a group of loyal agents. Though it seems that all the categories were brought at par by applying a degree of uniformity, in actual practice, however, it differed much. While the local chiefs were entitled to a kind of autonomy, the ordinary revenue paying zamindars were put under the surveillance of imperial officers. The relationship between the autonomous chiefs and ruling authority rested more on military and political interests than on fiscal considerations.[7]

While this was the general characteristics of the zamindari institution in provincial plane, numerous factors had their own role in its shaping. In Bengal, between the exit of the Afghans and the advent of the Mughals, the *Bhuinyas*, popularly known as the *Barabhuinyas*, a name received on the analogy of Assam though their number was not twelve, but many, rose in prominence and parcelled out the country among themselves as independent chiefs.[8] When the Mughal conquests began under Akbar and his successors, the Mughals kept themselves satisfied by forging certain links between them and the vanquished chiefs. In discussing the nature of relationships that developed between the Mughals and these fallen chiefs, one authority has said, the payment of *peshkash* signifying political submission alongside maintenance of autonomy was a better indication of the actual state of affairs.[9]

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[4] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India (1556-1707)*, (tr. Bengali), Calcutta (1985), p.165.

[5] Raychaudhuri and Habib, *op.cit*, p. 244.

[6] R.E. Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, Madison (1969), p.18.

[7] Irfan Habib, *op.cit*, pp.194-201.

[8] N. K. Bhattashali, 'Bengal Chiefs' Struggle for Independence in the Reign of Akbar and Jahangir', *Bengal Past and Present*, vol. 35, January-June 1928. Many interesting tales were, till recently, in vogue in popular plays and dramas highlighting their heroics and valour.

[9] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Bengal under Akbar and Jahangir*, Delhi, 1969 (second impression.), p. 39. But very recently his views have been contradicted by saying that in Bengal, two types of zamindari came upon the heels of the Mughal conquest: (1) those who got back their *watan jagirs* known as *Amli* Zamindars; Jessore and Bakla were of this type. They collected revenue and prepared *jama* and *hasil* as per Mughal revenue and rules. (2) Those who were returned the whole zamindari were known as *Ghair-i-Amli*, like Birbhum, Pachet, Bhusnah etc. They collected revenue in their own territories, according to their own customs. Aniruddha Ray, 'Mogal Amaler Talluqdar: Sankshipta Alochana', *Madyajuger Bharat*, pp. 37-9, Calcutta, 1987.

This practice continued in an attenuated form in the intervening period, with the suzerainty of the Mughals being established over extensive areas. Since the time of Ibrahim Khan's *subahdari* in 1617, many of the zamindars were restored to their old zamindaris, with all their privileges.[10] One singular feature of this period was, cropping up of numerous *talluqa*s and petty zamindars.[11] Thus, in Bengal, zamindari organization developed along its own peculiar way. Even province-wise, the zamindari tenure in Bengal was different to an extent from the zamindari in Bihar.[12] When the *nizamat* administration developed in Bengal in the beginning of the eighteenth century, the prevalent situation in the country provided ample scope to the zamindars to extend their power, influence and territory. However, almost all the zamindars were liable to some sort of financial obligations to the state. In this sense, the zamindars may be grouped into two categories: (i) the *peshkash* paying zamindars–the *Rajas* of Birbhum, Bishnupur, Tippera, Chandrokona etc. belonged to this category. The *peshkash* paying zamindars were not subject to any revenue regulations, but paid in fixed tributes[13] of different forms.[14] (ii) The *mal-wajibi* zamindars, who, were subjected to imperial regulations and paid their revenues depending upon the estimation of the actual yields. Their rights and duties were under close scrutiny of the imperial authority and they in fact 'constituted the bulk of the zamindars in Bengal and formed the backbone of the Mughal revenue system'.

The two categories, however, do not show clearly the differences that existed among these zamindars – in size, strength, resources, geography and strategic location. Depending upon the magnitude of their obligations towards the Government, the dynamics of their powers, privileges and their

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[10] But B. R. Grover is of the opinion that it did not signify the zamindars would only acknowledge nominal Mughal suzerainty and remain semi-independent. The zamindars were liable to come under Mughal zamindari regulations like acknowledging suzerainty and rendering military services. B. R. Grover, 'Bangladeshe Zamidari Bibartan O Talluqdari Pratha (1576 – 1765)', (Bengali tr. Aniruddha Ray) in Aniruddha Ray and Ratnabali Chattopadhaya (eds.), *Madhyayuge Banglar Samaj O Sanskriti*, Calcutta,1992, pp. 87-108.

[11] Tapan Raychaudhuri, *op.cit*, p.66.

[12] J. Shore's Minute, April 2, 1788; W.K. Firminger, (ed.), *The Fifth Report on the East India Company Affairs 1812*, vol. 2, Para 478-80.

[13] W.K Firminger, *ibid*, Para 184.

[14] The Rajas of Assam and Tipperah, on hearing the news of the appointment of Murshid Quli Khan, sent him ivory throne, *palki*, musk, fans of peacock feathers and herd of elephants as customary annual tribute. Salim Allah, *Tarikh-i-Bangla* (tr. F. Gladwin), Calcutta, 1788, p.142 (hereafter referred as *Tarikh*); Ghulam Hossain Salim, *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (tr. Abdus Salam), 1975, Delhi, (reprint), p.257 (hereafter referred as *Riyaz*).

relations with the Government used to be determined along with their powers and the regional customary practices. Shirin Akhtar[15] in her recent study has classified the zamindars of Bengal into four types – the autonomous chiefs, the frontier zamindars, the big zamindars, and petty or primary zamindars. But we should keep in mind that any such distinct delineation did not exist in practice and one overlapped the other.

The Autonomous Chiefs

The Rajas of Cooch Behar, Koch Hajo, Assam and Tippera fall in this category of the autonomous chiefs, i.e., the first among the above category. After the Mughal conquest, when the Cooch Behar rajas showed their allegiance and appeared personally at the Mughal Court, on Ibrahim Khan's recommendations, Raja Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan were reinstated to Cooch Behar[16] and made ally of the Mughals. Similarly, the Rajas of Assam and Tipperah were restored to their old possessions on condition of regular payment of *peshkash*.[17] One notable thing about this category is that they were almost in complete sovereignty paying only a nominal tribute (*peshkash*) to the Emperors and Nawabs, without being subjected to any revenue regulations. Another notable feature in their relations with the Mughals, was that their hereditary right to succession was not liable to renewal from the Emperor. Being almost free in their own affairs, these chiefs always took advantage of any opportunity to assert their independence. Both Salim Allah and Ghulam Hossain give an account how these chiefs, who did not bend their heads in submission, on hearing the news of the vigorous administration of Murshid Quli Khan, submitted and paid tributes.[18] Their territories included mostly in the North-Eastern border of the province. Their relation with the government was more of a political nature.

The Frontier Zamindars

The most notable among them were the Rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur. Birbhum was first brought under Mughal yoke, by Mir Jumla, in 1659, with

[15] Shirin Akhtar, *The Role of the* Zamindars *in Bengal, 1707-72,* Dhaka, 1982; "Nawabi Aamale Bhumi Byabasthapana O Bhumi Bhittick Samaj" in Sirajul Islam (ed.) *Bangladesher Itihas 1704-1971, in* Bangla, Vol. 3, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, February, 2000, pp. 29-61.
[16] Mirza Nathan, *Baharistan-I-Ghaibi,* (tr. M. I. Borah), Vol. 2, p. 521.
[17] Jadunath Sarkar (ed.), *History of Bengal,* Vol. 2, Dacca, 1948, p. 415.
[18] *Tarikh*, p. 142; *Riyaz*, p. 257.

the help of some zamindars like Khwaja Kamal Afghan.[19] Later Murshid Quli Khan conferred it on Asadullah for the purpose of guarding the western border against the Jharkhand zamindars.[20] Similarly, Bishnupur, surrounded by dense forests and hilly terrains, remained almost free from imperial control. Because of the location of these territories in the outlying parts of the *subah* and their inaccessibility, they were left free in their own affairs, on payment of nominal *peshkash.* Salim accounts that considering the pious nature of Asadullah and the inaccessibility of Bishnupur, surrounded by forests and mountains, Murshid Quli Khan also did not subject them to any revenue regulations.[21] In fact the zamindars of these two places were like guardian of the western frontier. Besides, these big zamindars, the rajas of the vast tracts of Jungle-Mahal, bordering Midnapore, Bishnupur and Birbhum, like Barda and Thakra in Midnapore,[22] the Rajput rajas of Pachet, Chandrokona and Mynachora[23], were also *peshkash*-paying zamindars and enjoyed almost same privileges. In addition to this, there were a number of petty zamindars in the north and north-eastern region in the *sarkars* of Ghoraghat, Cooch Behar, Bengal bhum, Dakkinkole, Kamrup, Udehur who were also prone to disown allegiance.[24]

The Big Zamindars

The third, and by far the most important, category was the big zamindars. Being located mostly in the interior contours of the province, their status and position was not the same as that of the first two categories; they were very much under the control of the government and they could be dispossessed on charges of treason and non-payment of revenues.[25] This category of zamindars formed the nuclei of the *Nizamat*.[26] They paid the bulk of the

[19] Durgadas Mazumdar (ed.), *West Bengal District Gazetteers – Birbhum*, 1975, pp. 105-06.
[20] James Grant, 'Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Finances of Bengal' *The Fifth Report-II,* p. 196.
[21] *Riyaz,* pp. 256-7.
[22] Raychaudhuri, *op.cit*, p. 64.
[23] James Grant, *op.cit,* p.198; Abdul Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan and His Times*, Dacca, 1963, p. 76; Firminger (ed.), Bengal District Records, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1914, p. 132.
[24] Akhtar, *op.cit*, p. 132.
[25] *Riyaz*, pp. 259, 265-7; Habib, *op. cit.*, pp.191-2. From the description of the previous two classes of zamindars it appears that the *Nizamat* rulers also did not attempt to break the *status quo*. Perhaps they were aware that it was better to maintain the *status quo*, by utilizing their services in guarding the frontiers of the kingdom, thus using them as buffer-ring, than to risk their kingdom in the altered situation, by attempting to break their privileged position.
[26] John R. McLane, *Land and Local Kingship in Eighteenth Century Bengal,* South Asian Studies 53, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 34-44.

revenue and became the mainstay of the Nawab's strength. More than half of the total revenue was supplied by them .They also formed the political and administrative strength of the *Nizamat.* Burdwan,[27] Rajshahi, Nadia, Dinajpore etc.[28] were some of such big zamindars.

The Petty Zamindars

It included zamindars of lesser delineations like *taraf, tappa*, peasants cultivating their own lands, arising out of *madad-i-mash* grants, royal grants for reclamation of waste lands, *taalluqdari,* collectors of revenue inheriting prescriptive rights in course of time and dividing tendencies of moderate zamindars.[29] Since their hold over the land was small, so was their influence either over region or in administration.

Such was the configuration and stratification of zamindars and their establishments during the Mughal and *Nizamat* period.

Units of zamindari, as it developed during the *Nizamat* period, varied astonishingly from one pargana to innumerable parganas. While a big zamindari, like Rajshahi, included under the direct patronage of the Nazim as many as 164 parganas in 1748[30], the petty zamindars, like Ramkishen and Shaker Khan, were zamindars of pargana Nurullahpur and *tappa* Faizabad,[31] respectively. Men from different strata ranging from petty clerks, revenue officials, legal or military personnel, fortune-seekers, saints and scholars came to fill the ranks of zamindars. Formation of zamindari along caste, clan or tribal lines, was a necessary adjunct of Mughal tradition.[32] This practice was present also in Bengal where zamindari pattern developed, to an extent, along caste lines. Barring a few adventures of non-Bengali caste, almost all the zamindars sprang up from the Rarh (Western Bengal), Varendra (North Bengal), or Vanga (East Bengal) *samaj* of the Brahman and Kayastha gentry and were thus related by kinship to the high caste gentry of smaller fortunes, who constituted quite a large number of the population.[33] In area-wise formation, the Pathan zamindars of Birbhum constituted a fairly large

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[27] McLane, *op.cit*, Part-II, see pp. 125-322 for the rise of Burdwan Raj.
[28] James Grant, *op.cit*, pp. 194-8.
[29] Akhtar, *op.cit*, pp. 16-17.
[30] James Grant, *op.cit*, p. 307.
[31] Akhtar, *op.cit,* p. 18.
[32] Raychoudhuri and Habib, *op.cit.*, p. 246, Habib, *op.cit*, pp. 170-80.
[33] Ratnalekha Ray, 'The Bengal: Local Magnates and the State before the Permanent Settlement' *Indian Economy and Social History Review,* vol.12, no.3, 1975, pp. 275-6.

militarist Muslim population.[34] In Bishnupur, the Brahmans were so large in number that they performed all agricultural operations,[35] which generally was inhibitive to them. Some Sadgop and Kaivarta zamindars were at Hijli, where the population of the two castes was in great majority.[36]

One interesting feature in the formation and organization of the zamindari, during the period of *Nizamat* was the preponderance of Hindu zamindars, who manned the various revenue departments as *qanungos*, *choudhuris*, *diwans* and *naibs*.[37] Perhaps a glance at the zamindari of the period would corroborate the validity of the argument.[38] Again among the Hindus, Kayasthas figured preponderantly followed by the Brahman.

While this was the structuaral and organizational pattern of the zamindari, the nature of relationship, between the state and the different categories of the zamindars varied accordingly.[39] Boughton Rous gives an account of the relationships which deserves to be quoted:

'Upon the demise of a zamindar, his heir or heiress transmitted an account of the event in a petition to the *Diwan* of the *Soubah* and the Roy Royan or if landholders of the first rank to the *Soubahdar* himself, with letters to all principal men of the court, soliciting their protection.

To an heir or heiress, who paid a large revenue to the state, the *Soubahdar* returned answer of condolence, accompanied with an honorary dress to the former and with a present of *shawls* to the latter...

After performing the funeral rites of the deceased the heir, if of age, was presented to the *Soubahdar*, by the *Diwan* and the Roy Royan and after receiving the betel leaf and an honorary dress, was permitted to assume the management of the affairs, of his zamindari.

Minor heirs or heiresses received the honorary dress and *shawls*, above

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[34] James Grant, *op.cit*, p. 196., also W. W. Hunter, *Annals of Rural Bengal*, London,1897, p. 88.

[35] Ratnalekha Ray, *op.cit*, p. 276.

[36] *Ibid*; *Bengal District Gezetteer, Midnapore*, p. 57.

[37] Akhtar, *op.cit*, p.33; see also S. A. Rahim, *Banglar Musalmander Itihas*, (in Bengali), Dhaka,1994, pp. 10-11.

[38] Rajshahi (for an account of the zamindari), see "The Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal–The Rajas of Rajashahi", *Calcutta Review*, Vol.56, 1983; also N.K. Sinha, vol. 2, pp. 120-22, Yusufpur, Rokunpur, Momenshahi, Rajnagar (See Akhtar, *op.cit*, pp. 37-42) were some of these categories. Various explanations have been offered in this regard. But it is difficult to say anything precisely what actually prompted to this development. One possible reason may be that the Hindus being expert in revenue matters got the favour of the Nizamat (Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Bengal*, vol.2, p. 410). Salim Allah also says that Murshid Quli Khan employed in his revenue none but the Bengali Hindus. Another reason is that since 1713, Bengal's relation being cut-off from Centre, it had to recruit from local persons, which gave way to them. Thus in the given circumstances they manipulated their position, to found zamindari houses.

[39] *Riyaz*, pp. 257-8.

mentioned, through agents deputed for that purpose, to the court of the *Nazim*.

The zamindars of the secondary rank were entitled only to a pair of *shawls* and a *perwannah* of condolence from the *Soubahdar* and for those of an inferior class, an answer from the Roy Royan, accompanied with the betel leaf was deemed sufficient'.[40]

From the above observation it becomes clear, that while the bigger zamindars were accorded an important status and they received Royal *sanads* and *khailats* directly from the *Subahdar*, the lesser ones received them from the Roy Royan. It also brings to light another important question. On every occasion, when a new zamindar succeeded upon the demise of the previous one, his right to accession was liable to renewal by a *sanad*[41] without which the zamindari right was deemed 'notorious and incontestable.'[42] This meant, in theory, subordination of the zamindars to the *Nizamat* and recognition to the Nawab's authority as the overlord, but in practice, the normal right of inheritance was followed, though incidents of disqualifications were not rare.[43]

II

Since the political and administrative framework of Bengal, had begun to change with the setting up of the *Nizamat,* it also wrought phenomenal changes in its relationships with the powerful zamindari elements. As a matter of fact, the socio-political situations in the early eighteenth century 'provided remarkable openings for the zamindarship in Bengal.' In their anxiety to maintain and consolidate their position in a remote province like Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan and his successors conferred zamindari rights on many parties.[44] This measure in itself contained the seeds of the increasing power and position of the zamindars over the other elements. When Murshid Quli Khan came as *Diwan* in Bengal, his measures to secure increased reveneue led to important changes in the agrarian relations of Bengal. During

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[40] C.W. Boughton Rous, *Dissertation Concerning the Landed Property of Bengal*, Appendices III, pp. 232-34, (London, 1971).

[41] For a copy of *Sanad*, see Appendix I of my dissertation, *Nizamat in Bengal.*

[42] James Grant, *An Enquiry into the Nature of* Zamindari *Tenures in the Landed Property of Bengal, 1791* (London, 1810), p. 43, Section II.

[43] Ananda Narain, of the Chaklah Rajshahi, and Sitaram, of Pargana Mahammadabad lost their zamindaris for failure to meet revenue demand and revolt respectively; Riyaz pp. 259, 266-67. Also two Afghan Zamindars, Shujait Khan and Nijat Khan of Tonki Sarubpur, lost their zamindari for their insolent behaviour. *Riyaz*, p. 278.

[44] Rous, op.cit., p. 39 also McLane, *op.cit.*, p. 36

the period 1700-22, Murshid Quli Khan, at an average rate of rupees one crore every year,[45] raised the collection of revenue from Rs. 1,17,28541 to Rs.1,41,15363. This was an increase of 20 percent in just 22 years, more than 22 percent in the past seventeenth century.[46] Murshid Quli Khan achieved this goal by three means: (i) He transferred the *Jagirdars* to Orissa and brought the *jagir* lands under *Khalisa* department. (ii) He prepared a new rent roll and placed *amils* and zamindars with instructions to be followed (iii) He was very strict in collection and effecting reduction in expenditure.[47] His uncompromising firmness in the collection of revenue has been harrowingly described by both Salim Allah and Ghulam Hussain Salim.[48] Thus by adopting a very careful and punctilious policy, Murshid Quli Khan had been successful in raising the revenue of the province, to a large extent. However, as regards the thoroughness of the settlement, there exists a lot of confusion. In the *Risala-i-Iirat,* it has been commented that since the days of Akbar, when Raja Todar Mal prepared the rent roll, no fresh survey had been conducted and new assessments made. The zamindars paid revenue according to the old revenue roll, but collected on the basis of an assessment of the current revenue paying capacity of the area and its actual produce.[49] John Shore maintains that the scope of interference by the *Nazim* in the management of revenue was partial and not systematically followed.[50]

At the time of Murshid Quli Khan's administration, there were 25,000 villages grouped into 1660 parganas and 34 *sarkars*[51] but for administrative and pecuniary considerations Murshid Quli compounded these 34 *sarkars*

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[45] *Riyaz*, Para 248.

[46] Sir John Shore's 'Minute on the Rights of Zamindars', Appendix No. 6, *Board of Revenue Proceedings*, April 2, 1788, vol.127, pp. 539-40.

[47] *Riyaz*, Para 248-9

[48] *Riyaz*, pp. 257-8.

[49] *Risala-i-Ziarat* (tr. Harbans Mukhia in type-script). Also Z. U. Malik 'Agararian Structure of Bengal at the Beginning of British Conquest' in *Medieval India- A Miscellany*, vol. iv, AMU, Aligarh, 1977, pp. 176-202.

[50] Karim thinks (Abdul Karim, *Murshid Quli Khan*, *op.cit.* p. 83) that at least no survey was ever conducted in Birbhum, Bishnupur and Calcutta. But this does not mean, according to him, that Murshid Quli Khan farmed out the lands to the highest bidders or the *zamindars* and collectors were allowed a free hand to deal with the *raiyats* (p. 93.). Another authority seems inclined to assume that no survey took place in the larger zamindaris (Ratnalekha Ray, 'Bengal', *IESHR*, vol.12, no. 3, pp. 272-73). In the absence of widespread settlement, it became customary to fix a lump-sum amount for the whole zamindari on the basis of a rough estimate of yields (Akhtar, p. 52), 'Minute of Shore', 18 June 1789, Appendix I, The Fifth Report II, para 378, p. 82.

[51] N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, vol. 2, (Calcutta, 1969), p. 16.

into 13 *chaklahs* to make the most important reform in the financial distribution of territory in Bengal.[52]

Murshid Quli Khan, faced with the problem of securing an increased flow of revenue, had to be very strict and adopted ruthless measures in the punctilious collection of revenue. Salim narrates how he confined the defaulters to the *chehl satun* (forty pillared) palace and at a *Baikunth* to realize from the zamindars and defaulters.[53] In this way he imposed pressure directly upon the zamindars and intermediary landholders and indirectly upon the cultivators. As a result of this policy, the zamindars either had to meet the government demand or else had to give way to other zamindars.[54]

Calkins suggests a consequence of this policy was that the weaker or less efficient Zamindars and intermediate collectors tended to lose their landholding rights and, in the process, he had converted a large and less stratified base of small landholders into a smaller but more stratified base of larger and, therefore, more powerful landholders.[55] Murshid Quli Khan seems to have adopted it as a matter of a policy to ease the problems of revenue collection. He encouraged the formation of big zamindaris.[56] He perhaps thought that it was easier to compel a few big zamindaris to observe the regulations

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[52] James Grant, 'Analysis', The Fifth Report-II, p. 174.

[53] *Riyaz*, pp. 258-9, 265.

[54] Ananda Narain, zamindar of the Chaklah Rajshahi, lost his zamindari for non-payment of revenue (*Riyaz*, p.259); The descendants of Isa Khan, Sonargaran, too lost a few valuable parganas. Alapshahi and Mominshahi were two such parganas taken away from them for failure of meeting revenue demand and settled with others. A. Rahim, *Banglar Musalmander Itihas*, Dhaka, p-10.

[55] Calkins, 'Ruling Group', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol.24, no. 4, pp. 799-806; McLane, *op.cit*, pp 36-8, sounds same with Calkins and elaborates the process. He says Murshid Quli Khan reconstructed the process in two stages —(i) Murshid Quli awarded contracts for some of Bengal to reveneue farmers or *ijaradars* to collect from the small landholders and (ii) certain zamindars and *ijaradars* were permitted to absorb the *taluks* of other landholders.

[56] By 1728, in Shujauddin Khan's *Jama Tumari Tashkhis*, fifteen large zamindaris extending over six hundred fifteen parganas, yielded Rs. 65,22,111 revenue i.e. almost half of the total revenue of the *Subah*. These fifteen zamindaris were Birbhum, Bishnupur, Burdwan, Rajshahi, Nadia, Dinajpur, Tipperah, Pachet, Mahmudshahi, Yousufpur, Rokunpur, Lashkarpur, Edrakpur, Futtesingh and Calcutta. James Grant, 'Analysis', *The Fifth Report-II*, pp. 194-98. Perhaps it would be too much to say that under the policy of the *Nazims* and the pressure of the big zamindars, the smaller zamindars had lost the ground and were swallowed. Because even after this, there remained 1045 parganas, which were divided among numerous petty zamindars. In Dacca, there were four hundred and eighteen zamindars, in Hugli five, in Silberis sixteen, in Sylhet one hundred forty-six, in Chittagong not less than fifteen hundred, in Midnapore about three thousand, in Purnea fifteen (N.K. Sinha, *op.cit*, p. 17). Besides, the growth of larger zamindaris, as Shirin Akhtar has shown, was not solely due to economic consequences; rather it was, in part, a response to the military as much as financial needs and through marriage, piece-meal purchase, inheritance, machination, bribery, and even force was resorted to. Akhtar, *op.cit*, p.31.

of the ruling power.[57] Though this policy simplified the process of revenue collection, it brought in its train, some inherent complications. By adopting such a policy 'Murshid Quli Khan established direct political alliances' with selected local barons, on whom the *Nizamat* henceforth became more and more dependent for managing the countryside.[58] This ultimately resulted in the formation of a powerful and compact 'regional ruling group' in which the zamindars played a most dominant part.

By the 1720s, the political framework of Bengal had undergone perceptible changes. The Emperors in Delhi were too busy with the affairs of the centre to deal effectively with the on goings in the province. The *Nazims*, on the other hand, could not assert their total independence.[59] The *Nazims*, therefore, had to evolve a framework through which much needed revenue could be secured, law and order problem could be tackled, and in general, the overall administrative functions could be kept streamlined. Not only that, in the event of any external danger, the *Nazims* had to ponder over measures to ward that off successfully. Hence, to tackle all these problems successfully, Murshid Quli Khan and his successors, had to make a deal with the zamindars, who were veritably 'the native guardians of the public peace and private rights', as Grant calls them, or *rajas* as they appear to be in contemporary literature. The growth of the larger zamindari and the conferment of greater rights and privileges, in this context, at least offer an explanation to the changed circumstances in Bengal. By encouraging a group of men, to enhance their power and influence, the *Nizamat* sought to create a loyal class as a necessary adjunct of the *Nizamat*.[60]

Murshid Quli Khan, to ensure a regular and smooth flow of revenue, compounded the thirty-four *sarkars* into bigger units of 13 *chaklahs* and prepared the *Jama Kamil Tumar*[61] in 1722 to raise Rs.142,88,186 as revenue. From this time onwards, Murshid Quli Khan also set a precedent of levying upon the zamindars "irregular and unconstitutional" *subahdari abwabs*.[62] Though the amount fixed by Murshid Quli Khan was negligible in course of time, it told heavily upon the zamindars and in consequence upon the peas-

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[57] N.K.Sinha, *op.cit*, p.14.

[58] Ratnalekha Ray, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

[59] Against this backdrop the process towards the evolution of a new *Nizamat* was at this time at work. (This has been discussed in chapter I of my unpublished MPhil dissertation). *Nizamat in Bengal* (CHS/SSS, JNU, 1988).

[60] Rajshahi, Burdwan, Dinajpur, Rokunpur, Mahmudshahi, Edrakpur, Rajnagar, etc. belonged to this genre which owed its enormous rise and growth in the 18th century to the official patronage. James Grant, *op.cit*, pp. 194-98; Akhtar, *op.cit*, p. 27, see also pp.34-6, McLane, *op.cit*, pp. 37-8.

[61] James Grant, *op.cit*, pp.189-90.

[62] *Ibid*, p. 205.

antry. Its effect upon the zamindars as well as the peasants could be gauged from the accounts of Sir John Shore. The *subahdari abwabs,* from Murshid Quli Khan to Alivardi Khan, according to the estimate of Shore, amounted to about 33 percent upon the *Tumar* or standard assessment in 1658; and those of the zamindars, upon the *ryots,* probably at the same period, could not be less than 50 percent; for exclusive of what they were obliged to pay to the *Nazims,* a fund was required for their subsistence or emoluments.[63] As far as the collection of revenue was concerned, Murshid Quli Khan was satisfied only with extracting revenue from the zamindars and leaving them more or less free to manage their own affairs – barring those defaulters, with whom he was very strict. The *Nizamat* found it profitable, for such a policy resulted in substantial reduction of the costs of revenue collection as well as peace-keeping force. Only an incredibly small force of two thousand cavalry and four thousand infantry represented the military power of the *Nizamat* at Murshid Quli Khan's time.[64] Moreover, with the flow of officers from the centre being stopped the Nizams had to recruit the hierarchy of officials, from the *Subah* itself, which again offered much scope to the zamindars.[65] Under the *Jama Kamil Tumar,* many small zamindars were placed under the supervision of a handful of great zamindars, nominated *chaklahdars,* through whom they paid their revenue.[66] The elevation of some bigger zamindars to the posts of *chaklahdars,* had its evil consequences also. Later they utilized their enhanced position at the cost of the *Nizamat* to their advantage.[67]

The *Risala-i-Zirat* accounts how the zamindars and functionaries of the government abused their power and position to extract maximum revenue and deprive the state of its share. 'These days men (i.e. zamindars) paid (revenue) on the basis of the same revenue roll (i.e. prepared at the time of Todar Mal in 1682), but collected it on the basis of an assessment of the current revenue paying capacity of the area and its actual produce'. At many places the actual collection was many times more than the revenue roll.[68] The functionaries of the government like *qanungos,* many of whom became themselves zamindars, purchased lands, but at the time of preparing a revenue roll, they showed a short-fall in the assessed revenue owing to desertion and diminution in the revenue paying capacity of the area. Later

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[63] John Shore's Minute, 18 June 1789, *The Fifth Report-II,* Para 41, p.11.
[64] *Riyaz,* p. 257.
[65] Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit,* p. 410
[66] N.K.Sinha, *op.cit,* pp.14,18.
[67] Akhtar, *op.cit,* p. 30; McLane, *op.cit,* pp. 39-40.
[68] *Risala-I-Zirat* (tr. H.Mukhia in typescript).

on they made up their loss by devising new imposts. Sometimes, at the time of preparing a new roll they detached their own *taalluqa* from one pargana and attached it to another and showed loss in the attached pargana to increase their profit.[69] Thus, the zamindars, parting with the authority of zamindars, let loose the zamindars to reign in their respective zamindaris almost freely.

Alongside revenue collection, the zamindars were the guardians of law and order and to some extent dispenser of justice in their own spheres of influence. In fact, the *Sanads* granted to the zamindars, speak of their police functions: 'He (zamindar) shall be careful that no thieves, highwaymen, or disturber of public peace, take shelter within the limits of his jurisdiction and he is otherwise to exert his endeavours to promote the comfort and security of the *Ryots*, the increase of cultivation, population and revenue. He shall be attentive to the protection of the high roads, that travellers may pass and re-pass without danger or molestation, but if a robbery should be committed he shall produce the perpetrators with their booty, which shall be restored to its owner and the delinquents given up for punishment; if he fails to produce the culprits he shall consider himself responsible for the amount plundered. He shall take special care that no individual within the boundaries of his zamindari shall practice an unlawful deed or drunkenness.'[70] Because of the distinctive physiography of Bengal, since the Mughal days, the zamindars had to maintain a contingent for the defence and maintenance of internal order. During the *Nizamat* rule, the authority of the zamindars further increased and led to the organization of regular police personnel under the authority of the zamindars.[71] With the growth of the extensive territorial zamindari in the interior of the *Subah,* the authority and importance of the posts of *faujdars,* which was already in a process of decline, had begun to be operative only in some frontier districts.[72] Even where the *faujdar* had authority, it could not be exercised there. For instance, the *faujdar's* authority did not extend to the zamindari of Burdwan and the Raja himself was responsible directly to the *Nawab* for both revenue and criminal jurisdiction since AD 1725.[73] With the advancing of years, the *Nizamat's* dependence upon the zamindars also increased. Murshid Quli Khan's policy, later on pursued by his successors, of encouraging big zamindars

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[69] *Ibid.*

[70] J. Shore's Minute, April, 1788, quoted in *The Fifth Report*-1, xi, vii.

[71] Akhtar, *op.cit*, pp.119-20.

[72] There were only nine *faujdari* circles in whole Bengal – Chittagong- Sylhet, Rungpur, Rangamati,Jalagarah (Purnea), Akbarnagar (Rajmahal), Rajshahi, Burdwan, Midnapore and Hugli.

[73] Akhtar, *op.cit*, p.118; McLane, *op.cit*, p.151.

and of placing lesser zamindars into the hands of the former had precluded the possibility of penetrating vertically the Nawab's authority down to the parganah or village level, where the petty zamindars and *taalluqdars* lived. The big zamindars got a free hand to deal with their lesser partners and asserting their own strength and position.[74]

The dependence of the Nizamat, on the big zamindars, for their military help[75] and the role played by the frontier rajas as guardian of border, also blunted the authority of the *Nazim*. The autonomy granted to some border chiefs and the absence of assessment into these and frontiers zamindaris,[76] to some extent, indicate the *Nazim*'s wisdom in utilizing their services in times of danger, leaving them almost undisturbed in the handling of their affairs. In the western and southern part of Bengal-Birbhum, Bishnupur, Pachet and over a large area prevailed the *peshkash*-paying zamindars. Birbhum had an area of 3,858 sq. miles stretching along the western border. 2/3rd of its territory was excluded from the revenue assessment and alloted 'for the maintenance of some thousands *barkandauzes*, matchlockmen, or native Hindustani militia, appointed to guard the frontiers towards the barbarous un-subdued rajas of South Bihar. ...the consequent loss of revenue, however, was less felt than the political disadvantage of dismembering a territory which commanded all the leading passes direct from bordering foreign independent countries'.[77] The *Nazims* thought it wise not to disturb the existing status, as it freed them from the burden of protecting the border regions.[78] As a matter of fact, the zamindars, by conferring zamindari on many parties in the border regions, intended not only to create a buffer zone for safeguarding its border region but also made them a necessary linchpin in administration.

During the reign of Alivardi Khan, the zamindars rendered very useful service to the *Nizamat*. In fact, the zamindar of Rajshahi, Ramkant, rendered him valuable services by leading campaigns in his fight for the throne.[79] At the critical hours of Alivardi's fight against Rustam Jang (Murshid Quli II),

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[74] McLane, *op.cit*, pp. 148-56.

[75] The zamindars of surrounding areas were asked to help the *Nizamat* forces during the suppression of Siataram's revolt; Riyaz, *op.cit*, pp. 266-67.

[76] See Classification of Zamindars.

[77] James Grant, *op.cit*, pp. 224-5.

[78] In the southern coasts of Bengal, to keep the country free from the onslaughts of *Maghs*, Arakanis, and *Firingis*, the *Nazims* continued the Mughal practice of conferring zamindari rights and helped the creation of a number of *zamindars* in the Chittagong and Noakhali regions, See Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of the East India Company in Chittagong, 1761-1785,* University of Chittagong, 1971, pp. 310-11; also James Grant, *op.cit*, p. 353.

[79] *Riyaz*, p. 315

son-in-law of the late Shujauddinn Md. Khan, the zamindars of Burdwan, sent an auxiliary force under the command of his *peshkar* Manickchand to help Alivardi.[80] During the recrudescence of Maratha incursions, the zamindars came forward with men, money and other requisites to help Alivardi.[81] From the accounts of Yousuf Ali, it seems that the zamindars of Burdwan, Birbhum, Midnapore must have come forward to sub-serve the *Nazim*'s forces. Not only that the zamindars of Rajshahi, Dinajpur[82] and Nadia[83] whose territories were not ravaged by the Marathas, offered financial help to the *Nazim*. It is not difficult to assume why the Maratha agent, Mir Habib, soon after the reduction of Katwa, Daihat and Bhowsingbera opened negotiations with *zamindars* to realize customs and rents from the people.[84]

The net result of all these activities was the bolstering up of the power and influence of the zamindars. The more the *Nazim* leaned on the help of the zamindars, the more it, in consequence, eroded the authority of the zamindars over them.

But the question is whether this phase of relationship was one of 'partnership' or emergence of a 'ruling group', as Calkins postulates. Admittedly, a close relationship existed between the *Nizamat* and the zamindars, but the basis and character of this relationship remained personal.

It is true that a sort of understanding in the relationship between the *Nizamat* and various zamindars, seems to have developed as it suited to their mutual interests. The *Nizamat* made it a condition that the zamindars pay the revenue in time[85] and render military as well as auxiliary service[86] as and when required. It was only on the basis of these conditions that the *Nizamat* had built up its relations with the zamindars. The *Nazim* was the overlord, and the zamindars were his fortune-seeking supplicants. Zamindars of, for example, Rajshahi, Burdwan, Momensahi, Nadia were given official backing and patronage. Some of them, like Zamindars of Birbhum, Bishnupur, Cooch Behar were allowed to continue and thrive in consideration of their strategic location and importance and some of them like Zamindars of Rokunpur,Yousufpur had came up through machination, bribery or misuse of power. Thus, it is quite clear that the rise and growth of the zamindari and

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[80] *Riyaz*, pp. 329-30; Yousuf Ali, *Tarikh-I-Bangla Mahabat Jangi* (tr. Abdus Subhan), pp. 29-30.
[81] Bengal Public Consultations, August 16, 1743, P/1/16, April 24, 1742, P/1/15.
[82] Charles Stewart, *History of Bengal,* London, 1813, p. 491, also Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Bengal,* II, Dacca, 1948, p. 449.
[83] *Bharat Chandrer Granthabali*, (Bengali) Basumati Sahitya Mandir, Kolkata, p. 6.
[84] Kalikinkar Dutta, *Alivardi and His Times*, Calcutta, 1963, pp. 54-5.
[85] *Riyaz*, Shujauddin Khan, on his accession, released some zamindars securing from them the pledge that they would pay revenue in time, pp. 289-90.
[86] See footnote 75; also Akhtar, *op.cit,* pp. 95-7.

the power and influence exercised by the zamindars had been built up not as a group or block, but rather as individuals having personal loyalty and fidelity solely to the *Nizamat* to serve their own vested interests. There was no institutional basis of the balance between the two. This is all the more pronounced during Shujauddin's *Nizamat,* who, after accession, when entrusted the functions of the *Nizamat* to a Council did not include any zamindars.[87] Moreover in 1739-40, at the time of Alivardi's contest for the throne, the zamindars in their loyalty got themselves divided into two groups. Again the same set of zamindars did not hesitate to switch their loyalty from Sirajuddaulah to the English when the latter began to emerge politically stronger. Even after 1757, when the district of Burdwan was ceded to the English in 1760, the Raja of Burdwan in alliance with the Rajas of Birbhum and Bishnupur raised the standard of revolt against the attempt and proceeded to oppose the Company's troops.[88] Observing the peculiar nature of the zamindars, Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai remarks: 'They are a set of men faithless to a high degree, short-sighted, impatient of control, even ready, on the least appearance of a revolution to turn their backs on their masters and to forget the most important favours received at their hands, losing no opportunity to execute all the mischief which occasion presents and on that account of their strange and inconsistent character, requiring at all times the strong grasp of a curbing hand'.[89] As the rise of the zamindars in the socio-political framework of Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century was, primarily based on decimated personal relationship, they failed to withstand the pressure in course of the emergence of new political alignment.

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[87] *Riyaz*, pp. 291-2; Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline: Eighteenth Century Bengal*, New Delhi, 1995, p.19.

[88] Burdwan District Gazetteer, Burdwan, 1997 (reprint), p. 41; also McLane, *op. cit,* pp.183-5.

[89] Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai, *Seir-ul-Mutakherin,* 1789, (vol. ii, tr. Haji Mustafa), Calcutta, 1902, pp. 393-4.

Some Aspects of Mohammedan Finance

ANJONA CHATTOPADHYAY

The theory of taxation and finance was developed by the jurists of Islam with great ingenuity and minuteness. From the very beginning of its history, the Islamic Law of taxation was based on reason and actual facts. The Byzantine and Persian practices and the prevailing customs were taken as the bases and then the principles of Muslim theory were applied to them to bring them as far as practicable in line with the ideas of Islam. This process began consciously with the second Caliph Omar and continued down to the days of the Abbasid Khalifas. By the second and third century of *Hijra,* enormous literature sprang up on different aspects of Muslim law including finance and taxation, and it began to show a tendency towards rigidity. Although the sources of inspiration of the Muslim jurists were more or less the same yet there was a great divergence of opinion between them on some important matters. The Hanbali and Maliki laws were substantially different from the Shafi and Hanafi. The latter, however, agreed on very many points and have been largely followed by the Muslims of Central and Eastern Asia.

In India, the Hanafi School prevailed and remained the state religion throughout the Muslim period. It is, therefore, necessary for a full appreciation of the theory and practices of the Sultans of Delhi to grasp the broad principles of taxation as propounded by the Hanafites.[1]

Muslim jurists divide the sources of revenue under two heads – *fa'y* and *zakat. Fa'y* might be styled as the secular source and *zakat* as the religious one. *Fa'y* was divided into three big sub-heads—*khams*, *jizyah* and *kharaj,* and was levied on non-Muslims.[2] The *zakat* could be demanded only from Muslims, for non-Muslims had no obligation to observe the tenets of Islam. The religious taxes were grouped under the name of *zakat*—so called because a Muslim purifies himself of greed and avarice by sharing his property with the poor and needy. It is an act of piety to pay *zakat;* this religious obligation must be enforced by the Imam, for it is based on a clear injunction of the

[1] R. P. Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration,* Allahabad, 1956, p. 338
[2] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *Mohammedan Theories of Finance,* New York, 1916, p. 525

Quran.[3] *Zakat* and *sadaqah*, as religious taxes, are often confused. But in reality *sadaqah* is genus of which *zakat* is only the species. More clearly all '*Zakat* is also *sadaqah* but only the *sadaqah* which is *farz* (obligatory) is *zakat*.' But Shafi and Mawardi made no difference between the two and consider both as the same. The property subject to *zakat* was again divided into apparent and non-apparent property. *Zakat* could be levied in a certain definite minimum quantity called the '*nisab*'. This *nisab* had three definite qualities: (i) *nisab* must be owned in full ownership, (ii) *nisab* must be over and above the primary necessities of life, and (iii) *nisab* must be free from debt.[4] Thus the bare necessities of life were free from *zakat* taxes. Again there were three definite conditions which a person must fulfil before he had a right to pay the *zakat* tax: (i) Reason and maturity, for there can be no responsibility without them; (ii) state of Islam, because the payment of *zakat* is an act of worship and as such it can rightly be performed by a Muslim only; (iii) Freedom of person because a slave could not own any property.[5] These qualifications, naturally, therefore, exempted infants, non-Muslims, lunatics, slaves and even debtors, i.e. insolvent persons from paying *zakat* tax.

Property, subject to *zakat*, was divided into apparent and non-apparent property. Apparent property comprised of animals and agricultural produce while the non-apparent property included gold, silver and articles of trade.[6] On non-apparent property the owner was left to pay whatever he thought he should, without being questioned. But the property which was exposed to public view and, therefore, apparent had to pay the prescribed rate.[7] As regards the collection of *zakat*, in theory, at least Imam had no right to collect it by force because should he do so, the obligation of *zakat* to God remained undischarged. Hanifite doctors give the right of collecting the *zakat* tax to the state on the ground that state provided protection to property. The *zakat* of the apparent property was collected by the state according to the fixed rate but the *zakat* of non-apparent property was given to the beneficiaries directly by the property owner according to his own discretion and judgment.[8]

Tithe was another source of *sadaqah*. Opinions were divided as to whether *tithe was* levied on the actual produce of the land or the actual productivity of the soil. *Tithe* is considered by Hanifite doctors as *zakat* on the produce of

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[3] Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 95.
[4] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op.cit*, p. 207
[5] *Ibid*, p. 213
[6] *Ibid*, p. 297
[7] R. P. Tripathi, *op. cit*, p. 346
[8] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op. cit*, p. 526

land. They differentiate between the *zakat* proper and *tithe*; they said 'that while *Zakat* was an act of worship, pure and simple, *Tithe* is primarily a financial charge (*Maunah*) although it participates in a way in the nature of worship'.[9] *Tithe* could be distinguished from *kharaj* in two respects: Firstly, *kharaj* was definitely fixed on the potential productivity of the soil while the *Tithe* was a tax on the actual produce and was levied only on the Muslims, being a religious *farz*. Secondly, *tithe* required the condition of *nisab* or taxable minimum which was not necessary in the case of *kharaj*. *Tithe* was realised and expended by the state according to the rules of *sadaqah* tax which was different from those of the *kharaj*. The special feature of *tithe* was that it did not exempt minors, lunatics and *waqfs* from payment. Moreover, *tithe*, unlike *zakat* proper, could be forcibly realised without losing any of its significance.

The articles on which *tithe* was levied are specially mentioned by the jurists. They were wheat, barley, rice, millet, maize, beans, and peas. Some jurists included olive, saffron and honey. With regard to vegetables, Hanifa proposed tax irrespective of *nisab* but Abu Yusuf and Muhammad insisted on it. Among those exempted from this tax might be mentioned as habitations, salt, silk worms etc. Articles such as fire wood and herbage that grow spontaneously were also exempted.

The general rule governing the *tithe* rate was that land irrigated by rain or running water and wild fruits paid 1/10th while crops watered by artificial means of irrigation paid half of that rate. In either case the tax was on gross produce. Unlike Abu Hanifa, Abu Yusuf exempted from tax such quantities as were necessary for the use of the producer and his family.

According to Hanifa *Tithe* was levied only from the produce of *tithe* lands and not from that of *Kharaj* land. Both taxes could not be levied together. But Shafi did not accept this view and held that both taxes might be levied simultaneously on the same land.

Later jurists described another class of land different from either the *kharaj* or *tithe* lands. This class of land they called *mumlakat* or *amiriyah*. Under it came those territories which were conquered by force or treaty, but were not left in the possession of their original proprietors and were made the property of the public treasury. The owners of such lands were then regarded as mere tenants and paid *tithe* on the produce. These tenants forfeited their tenancy right if they failed to cultivate their land for three years, though they were not permanently disqualified to hold it again. They

[9] *Ibid*, p. 284

could bequeath their holdings to their descendants but could not sell or make gifts or *waqfs* or transfer tenancy rights without the permission of the Sultan.[10]

The secular revenues *(fa'y)* consists of *jiziya, kharaj* and *khums.* Different interpretations of *jiziya* have been given in the past but there is a tendency among modern scholars to view it from a fresh standpoint altogether. It, therefore, seems necessary to state the theory of the *jiziya* as it had been interpreted by the authoritative exponents and doctors of Muslim jurisprudence. It is also equally important to trace the history of the manner in which theory was understood and applied in actual practice by the Muslim rulers with special reference to India. In the 'Fiqh' (Islamic Law books), the *jiziya* is discussed in connection with the manner in which the subjugated enemies had to be treated under the Islamic state. The 'Fiqh' ordained that while the 'Pagans' were to be offered only the choice between Islam and death, the possessors of a scripture may obtain security for themselves, their families and goods by paying the *jiziya.*

Relying on this, the 'Fiqh' (Islamic law) regarded the *jiziya* as an individual poll tax, by payment of which Christians, Jews and others, made a contract with the Islamic community and so that they were henceforth not only tolerated but even had a claim for protection. Certain Christian groups occupied a special position and did not pay *jiziya*. Only adult males were liable to the tax. Women, Children and old men are exempted as war was not waged on them. Blind men and cripples only paid when they were wealthy. Poor men and beggars were not expected to pay. Monks were exempted if they were poor. But if their monasteries were wealthy their supervisors had to pay the tax.

Jiziya was directly associated with and, therefore, arose from the duty which was levied upon every Muslim to wage holy war on non-Muslims. *Jehad* implied the spread of Islam by arms as a religious duty enjoined on Muslims in general. It was a duty in general on all male, free adult Muslims, sound in mind and body and having means enough to reach the Muslim army, yet not a duty necessarily on every individual, but properly performed when done by a certain member. So it must be continued to be done until the whole world was under the rule of Islam.

When the lands beyond Arabia quickly fell under the arms of the Muslim Arabs and they found that it was impossible either to convert their entire

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[10] R. P. Tripathi, p. 347, 348

populations or to exterminate them, the conquerors were confronted with the dilemma of how to deal with such subjugated people. The solution of this problem was the *jiziya* which implied that the non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state could be allowed to purchase the right of living under the protection of the state by paying a price for such a privilege, that is to say by becoming *zimmis* whose life was held under a contract.

The *jiziya* was, therefore, levied on those persons who being non- Muslims were admitted to the status of *zimmis* and not all non-Muslims.[11] The word *jiziya,* says Aghnides, 'was derived from *Jaza*, meaning compensation, requital for good or evil'.[12] This tax owed its name to the fact that it was taken from the *zimmis* as a punishment for their disbelief in order to humiliate them, or it might be, by way of mercy, as price for the protection given to them by the Muslims.

The origin of *jiziya* was from divine words, i.e. Koran. 'Make war upon such of those to whom a scripture has been given as do not believe in God nor the Last Day until they pay by their hands the *Jiziyah* in order to be humiliated. The *Zimmis* by paying the *Jiziyah* became entitled to two rights: (i) Security from molestation and (ii) protection. By virtue of the first right they became safe (Amin) and of the second protégés (mahrus)'.[13] Later on *jiziya* began to be imposed as a punishment on the infidels for their disbelief. People falling within the jurisdiction of *jiziya* were divided into rich, the middle class, and the poor, and were taxed according to their respective financial capacities.[14]

Further exposition and elaboration of *jiziya* has been given by the authoritative Muslim jurists. Their views as given by Aghnides may be summarized thus: First, that the Muslim state as originally conceived does not contemplate providing for the residence and protection of a non-Muslim within it, and hence if a non-Muslim must need be allowed to live in it or to enjoy its protection, he must pay a price for this privilege or favour whose price was the *jiziya*. Secondly, because the non-Muslim persisted in his disbelief and refused to embrace the faith, he must be punished by being subjected to abject humiliation and contempt. Thirdly, it was intended that the non-Muslim must be made to realise that he did not enjoy the status of a citizen in a Muslim state and, therefore, he was allowed to exist in it only on the sufferance of the head of the Muslim world, the Caliph. Fourthly, because

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[11] P. Saran, *Studies in Medieval Indian History*, Delhi, 1952, pp. 113, 116.
[12] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op.cit,* p. 398.
[13] P. Saran, *op. cit,* p. 116.
[14] R.P. Tripathi, p. 341.

the non-Muslims, in strict theory, could not be allowed to fight on behalf of the Islamic state, he must pay for the support and upkeep of the army of the faithful (Muslims) who fought for the faith (Islam). Thus, there were two payments involved in the *jiziya*: (i) the price for the privilege of being allowed to exist within the Islamic state and (ii) a sort of war gild, or a compensation for their being spared from fighting the wars of the Islamic state. In actual practice, however, no distinction was even made between these two counts of payment, because the *jiziya* was collected both in war as well as peace times. Were it levied merely in lieu of assistance in war which they would have rendered if they had embraced the faith, the *jiziya* would not have been collected in times of peace. The exemption which was made in the case of women and children, the insane and imbecile and the destitute or the disabled and slaves and monks were dictated by practical necessity, as these classes of people being unable to earn were not in a position to pay. According to one view, the poor who were unable to pay should be ousted from the Muslim country; according to another, they are subject to the *jiziya* like others. The *jiziya* was imposed with two fold objective: (i) to make the *zimmi* pay for certain advantages which he, as non-Muslim, was not entitled to, but was allowed to enjoy; and (ii) to subject him to humiliation and contempt to make him feel his inferior and contemptible position.[15]

There were two kinds of the *jiziya*: (i) one the *jiziya* imposed by treaty, the amount of which had been fixed by the terms of the agreement and might not be subsequently changed. In this, the Shafite and Hanifite schools hold in common the view that the rate of the *jiziya* should never be less than one *dinar* per head. The various schools authorized the Imam to settle the terms of the *jiziya*. (ii) The *jiziya* which was imposed by the Imam upon the people conquered by force of arms. In India, it used to be realised in *tankas* and rupees instead of *dinars* and *dirham*.[16]

The *jiziya* became due in the beginning of the year, but concerning its realisation there were different views. According to Abu Hanifah, it might be collected two or three days before the close of the year. According to others, at intervals of two or three months the *jiziya* became cancelled by conversion to Islam, by death and according to Abu Hanifah, even by non-collection. Other jurists, however, did not agree with the last condition.[17]

It is clear from the *Chach Nama* that Muhammad bin Qasim had levied *jiziya* in Sind. We had a doubt regarding the position under the Sultans of

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[15] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op. cit*, p. 405.
[16] *Ibid*, p. 401
[17] *Ibid*, pp. 405, 406

Delhi during the thirteenth century. We had practically no information about the actual state of affairs but the theoretical position was stated by Fakhr-i-Mudabbir. His views about the nature of *jiziya*, the position of *Zimmis*, may be thus summarised:

1. If the Muslims besiege any fort or city in a *dar-u'l-harb*, their first duty is to offer Islam to the non-Muslims. If they accept it, hostilities should cease and siege should be given up forthwith. If they refuse to accept Islam, *jiziya* should be demanded from them. If they consent to pay it, all conflicts should cease and it was not proper to carry on conflict with them. If, on the contrary, they refuse to accept Islam and also refuse to pay *jiziya*, conflict should be continued.

2. If truce is effected, it should be respected. If they visit the army of the Mussalmans, they should not be enslaved for they were like free people.

3. If any *kafir* man or woman is given shelter by any person, it is not proper for any Muslim to kill him, provided no treachery or mischief is suspected from him.

4. All matters concerning *jiziya* may be decided in any one of the following ways: either some men from both sides should work out a settlement and on that basis the non-Muslims should consent to pay *Jiziya*, or the conquerors should impose it on the people.

5. The *jiziya* may be taken from the *Ahl-i'-Ajam* (non-Arabs), the Jews, the Christians, the Sabians, and the idol-worshippers. It should not be realised from the idol-worshippers of Arabia, heretics, children, minors, invalids, blind men, the *dervishes* who do not earn, and the monks.

6. The *zimmis* should not be allowed to ride on horses in the Islamic cities (*Shahr-i-Islam*). Their bridles, clothes and posture of sitting should be different from that of the Mussalmans.

But this was merely an exposition of the theoretical position and, that too, a mere reharse of the statements of *Hedayah*. For an assessment of the actual position, one had to bear in mind the following facts:

a) There was no direct or explicit reference to the imposition of *jiziya* by the early Turkish Sultans of Delhi in the contemporary records.

b) The terms *jiziya* was used in contemporary works mostly as a synonym for land-tax (*kharaj*).

c) The Hindus had taken part in military expeditions during the period under review and, therefore, there was no justification for the imposition of *jiziya* upon them.

d) In a country like India, there were practical difficulties in realising *jiziya* from individuals. Elaborate administrative machinery was required for this purpose.[18]

Now came in *kharaj* or the land-tax. It means revenue derived from a piece of ground. *Kharaj* was divided into proportional and fixed *kharaj*. The proportional consisted in a proportion of the produce of ground like one-half, one-third, one-fourth or one-fifth of the same. Fixed *kharaj,* on the contrary, was a fixed charge on the ground at so much of natural produce or money per unit area or per tree. It means two systems of assessment, i.e. assessment in proportion to the produce of land and assessment according to the area cultivated. The system of measurement by *jarib* was used for fixing the area and quality of land was determined by three factors. First of all, was the quality of land itself which yields comparatively more or less produce. The second factor was the kind of crop since the price of different crops varied. The Third factor pertained to the method of irrigation. The case of cash payments of the fourth factor was also taken into consideration, namely, the distance of the land from cities and markets, for the obvious reason oftransit charges.[19]

Where the division of crop was adopted the scale of tax ranged between one-half to one-fifth. It was specifically laid down by jurists that in no case should the *kharaj* exceed one-half although Muhammad Ibn-ul Hasan permitted increment if the land be capable of bearing the burden. In the case of the total failure of crops owing to natural calamities, the *kharaj* automatically lapses, but no exemption was urged for partial failures. The *kharaj maqasama* (division of crop) was due whenever the crop was ready. It might be more than once a year. But in the system of cash payment the tax was levied only once a year. The scales of cash payment varied from one to five *dirham* according to the class of produce. Shafi raised it from two to eight *dirham*. Others, however, strike a mean between the two.

Originally the Muslims were exempted from the payment of land-tax. Owing to large conversion the system broke down and even the early Muslims were forced to levy land-tax on the Muslims as well. By the time of

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[18] Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century,* Delhi, 1961, pp. 313, 315

[19] Nicholas P Aghnides, *op.cit*, p. 382

the classical jurists, *Kharaj* was considered due from both the Muslims and non-Muslims. They made no distinction in the matter of *kharaj* either in terms of religion, sex, age or in terms of freedom. Whosoever owned the *kharaj* land was liable to pay the tax whether he cultivated it or not. Mawardi, however, suggests that if the land was not cultivated the lowest assessment was to be demanded.

The Muslim law did not favour ejectments from holdings. Not that it completely rejected or declared it unlawful, but it was very reluctant in adopting it. It could be adopted when every other method had been tried and failed. If the land holder was unable to pay the revenue for want of means to cultivate his land, the state was to advance him loans to provide himself with necessary implements and means of cultivation. As an alternative to this the land might be let out to someone else for the time being as the original holder was unable to pay. The state might also cultivate it from public funds. When the original holder was in a position or was willing to pay the revenue, his land was to be restored back to him. If it were found inevitable to sell the land to somebody else, then the state was to deduct from the sale price its lawful dues and make over the balance to the owner.[20]

Nobody holding the *kharaj* land was exempted from the payment of the tax, irrespective of his being either minor or major, man or woman, free or slave and an infidel or a Muslim. Though originally the Muslims were outside the domain of the *kharaj* tax, they paid the *tithe* 'usur'. Any person deliberately neglecting the cultivation of the land was not exempted from *kharaj* tax. According to Abu Hanifa, a piece of land never paid both *kharaj* and *tithe*. But *kharaj* and *tithe* were not to be confused; while the former was essentially secular, the later was religious and obligatory to Muslims.[21]

The last of the secular taxes was *khums ghanaim*, one-fifth of war booty and also one-fifth levied on mines and treasure-trove; this was considered as case of spoil of war because these were believed to belong formerly to infidels and became Moslem property by conquest.[22]

The spoils of war were called *ghanimah*. Legally all booty should be collected, and a fifth set apart for the state, the rest being equitably distributed among the soldiers. It was lawful for the Sultan or the Commander-in-Chief to select an animal, a sword, or some other article which particularly pleases him for his own use before the division of the spoils. This was called *safiyah*, and was not taken into consideration at the time of

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[20] R. P. Tripathi, *op.cit*, pp. 342, 344

[21] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op.cit*, p. 389

[22] U. N. Day, *Administrative System of Delhi Sultanate*, Allahabad, 1959, p. 90.

division. The portion which goes to the public exchequer was legally called *khums*. Gradually a practice grew up in the sultanate of Delhi that one-fifth was distributed among the soldiers and four-fifth kept in the treasury; Firuz Shah's Ulama considered it illegal and the Sultan re-established the old system. When the booty was distributed a cavalryman was given twice and sometimes thrice as much as a foot soldier.

According to the Hanafi School of jurisprudence, whose tenets mostly found favour in India, the state was entitled to one-fifth of all minerals, provided they were solid and capable of being melted and bearing an imprint. The *Shafi* is maintained that no tax is due on minerals and the *Malik* is told that *zakat* should be paid, even though a year had not elapsed since their extraction. The same principle applied to treasure-trove, of which, one-fifth had to be paid to the state and the rest belonged to the finder, irrespective of his being a Muslim or a *Zimmi*. If the land did not belong to the finder, then the land owner was entitled to four-fifths of the treasure and the rest went to the state. The state claimed a share only of unstamped bullion or of money minted before the conquest of the area by Muslims. The argument was that the treasure would have formed part of the spoils of war if it had not been hidden. Sultan Sikandar Lodi twice refused to take any portion of treasure-trove discovered in his reign; probably the coins bore Islamic legends. This law had its counterpart in the Hindu *Nitishastras*. Kauṭilya holds that all treasure-trove belongs to the king, but Vishnu takes a more lenient view and allowed a small share to the finder; according to the latter, the Brahmins may keep the whole. Vishnu lays down that a king was entitled to the entire product of mines.

The property of Muslims dying intestate and without heirs belonged entirely to the state; the property of a *Zimmi* dying in similar circumstances was handed over to his community.[23]

The Hindus were first recognised as *zimmis* and *muahids*, or allies and protected people, by Muhammad bin Qasim on his conquest of Sind, and he imposed on them the *jiziya* in accordance with the rates universally recognised in the Muslim world. The sultans of Delhi assessed this tax in their own money, and charged ten, twenty and forty *tankahs* respectively. The Brahmins, as monks and priests, were exempted. Firuz Shah, after consulting the Ulama, levied the tax on them as well; probably he did not recognise men of the Brahmin caste who did not devote themselves exclusively to religious pursuits as monks and priests. This measure, however, caused considerable unrest in the capital. The Sultan remained

[23] Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op. cit*, pp . 99, 100

firm and ultimately the rich Hindus of Delhi undertook to pay for these Brahmins.

On a subsequent representation, the Sultan reduced the tax on the richer Brahmins to ten *tankahs* or fifty *jitals* each. This is the only occasion on record in the history of the sultanate when the imposition of *jiziya* was resented, so the assessment must have been lenient.

There is nothing in the chronicles to support a modern view that 'Ala-ud-Din Khalji neither exacted *Jiziya* from the Hindus nor recognised them as *zimmi*; a subject, who was neither a Muslim nor a *zimmi,* could not reside in a Muslim state.

The *zakat* on imports was, a fortieth of the value of the merchandise, on horses it was 5 per cent. These charges were doubled in the case of non-Muslim traders. Ibn Batutah found that the sultanate charged a quarter as duty on all imports, but he affirmed that it was reduced later by Muhammad bin Tughluq to the legal ratio.

Probably the Sultan had increased the import duty when his finances worried him; the restoration of the legal proportion must have been the result of a decrease in revenue owing to the adverse effect of his enhanced impost on trade. Sikandar Lodi, owing to a transient shortage of corn, abolished the *zakat* on grain and it was not renewed by any subsequent Sultan. Some Sultans were not content with this tax and levied a cess called *danganah,* which is mentioned among the taxes abolished by Firuz Shah. When the *zakat* had been assessed in the *sarai adl,* on the commodities brought for sale, they were taken to another warehouse called *daribah* or *khazinah,* where they were weighed again. A fresh tax of a *dang* on every *tankah* of their assessed value was levied, which comes to about ½ per cent, not crippling in amount but vexatious in method.

The main source of income, indeed the backbone of Indian finance, had always been the land revenue. In Muslim states, all cultivated land was legally classified for the purposes of assessment of land revenue. The main classifications were: *ushri, kharaji* and *sulh*; other classifications had not received such universal recognition. *Ushri* lands were (i) the land of *Jazirát-u'l-Arab*; (ii) all lands whose owners accepted Islam of their own accord and were left in possession on their estates; (iii) all land conquered by force and distributed among Muslim soldiers; (iv) habitations of Muslims converted into garden, provided they were irrigated with *tithe* water or alternately with *ushri* and *kharaji* water; (v) waste-land developed by Muslims with the Imam's permission, provided they were, according to Abu Yusuf, in an *ushri* district, or, according to Muhammad ibn Hasan, if they had been irrigated with *tithe* water.

Later writers on the agrarian system under the sultans of Delhi did not mention the existence of *ushri* lands. It is true that the extent of these areas was not great, but there can be no doubt about their existence. Muhammad bin Qasim recognised the lands of all who accepted Islam as *ushri*. Similarly Sultan Qutb-u'd-din Aibak commanded that all the lands possessed by Muslims should be treated as *ushri* and be required to pay only a tenth or a twentieth of the produce as revenue. This order probably applied to the region of Lahore, though it may have extended to that part of the Punjab which was formerly under the Ghaznavids. *Ushri* lands continued to exist under the later sultans.[24]

Iltutmish, the real founder of Moslem empire in India, did little in the revenue system and hardly any record of this fiscal administration is found in the chronicles. Iltutmish was so busy with his expeditions and in subduing the Hindu chiefs and Muslim generals of Qutb-u'd-din Aibak, that he had little time to devote his attention to revenue administration. He divided the kingdom into *iqtas* amongst his soldiers and nobles as their remuneration for their services. His main source of income came from the war booty and the sums from subjugated native chiefs.[25]

Balban, who occupied a greater portion of the thirteenth century, had to face the problem of Mongol invasion and felt the weight of their pressure considerably. In this policy he had two definite aims: firstly to strengthen his army and secondly, to abstain from conquest of further territories. Thus while his income from the war booty was curtailed, his expenditure over the army was considerably increased.

Balban naturally made a review of the existing system and found a lot of corruption and mismanagement among the assignees or the '*iqta*' holders. The *iqta* holders or *muqtis* who received the villages in Doab by way of salary now no longer voluntarily rendered military service; probably they were incapable of service due to old age or disease. Balban, however, could not bring about any effective change in them owing to the appeals from Malikul Umra, Fakhruddin, the *Kotwal* of Delhi.[26] Balban took another step to supervise *iqta* holders; he appointed his sons to important provinces as governors, and created the office of *Khwaja*. They were directly answerable to the central government and as such were a clear check over the *muqti*'s

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[24] Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op.cit*, pp. 96, 100.

[25] Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (ed.), *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi* by Ziauddin Barani, (*Bibliotheca Indica*) BI 33-1860-62 Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1862, pp. 61, 63

[26] Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by its Own Historians, The Muhammadan Period*, Vol. III, Allahabad, 1956, pp. 107, 108

actions and violation of the central authority. It was a sort of diarchy though in a very limited sense, created by Balban.[27] Dr Tripathi suggests that *Khwaja* was a civil official and had to deal with accounts and records.[28]

Besides *iqtas,* there were further divisions called *khitta* and *qasba* among whose officials are mentioned *karkun* and *mutsaraf* and also *chaudhari* and *Muqaddam.*[29] *Mustsaraf* and *Karkuns* were undoubtedly connected with revenue and office work.

Besides *iqtas,* there were other lands as well, i.e. the Delhi country comprising mainly of the *khalisa* land directly under the Revenue Ministry and the river country of Doab under Governors.[30] The fact that *Amils* gave accounts directly to central government indicates that the revenue of these regions were directly controlled by the central government.[31] The *Muqta* was the executive head and *Amils* served under him, but rendered the financial accounts to the Central Government. Thus the *Amils* were in charge of revenue divisions in the *khalisa* or land of Doab country.[32]

In the fiscal system of Delhi sultanate two things were important: (i) the mode of assessment and (ii) the proportion or amount of the state share. There were three modes of assessment—compounding, sharing and measurement. During the Sultanate period *iqtas* were common and their holders were called *muqtis.* Now *iqta,* according to Moreland, was an assignment and implied Military Service. Moreland has also rendered the meaning of *iqta* as an assignment of revenue.[33] Thus connecting the two meaning, *iqta* comes to be a portion of land given to an individual the revenue of which was supposed to be equivalent to his pay. The words *iqta, muqta, muqtaa,* etc. are all derived from the same root *qita* meaning 'a portion' or 'to divide into portions'. *Muqtai* 'was a system of compounding in which the peasant agreed to pay a certain amount of his produce to the king'. But during the thirteenth century there was nothing definite like this compounding system; and the system which prevailed in the provinces and the *iqtas* might be called a mixture of farming and compounding systems. There were *muqaddams* and *chaudharis.* Alauddin found them growing richer day by day and prevented this. This indicates that these *chaudharis* and *muqaddams*

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[27] Zia ud Din Barani, *op. cit,* p. 36
[28] R. P. Tripathi, *op.cit,* p. 251
[29] Zia ud Din Barani, p. 106.
[30] W. H. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India,* Allahabad, 1929, p. 23.
[31] Zia ud Din Barani, p. 52.
[32] R. P. Tripathi, p. 246.
[33] W. H. Moreland, *op. cit,* p. 273

used to contract a sum with the Government or *Muqtas* and then realised more from the peasants; this certainly was a farming system. But the relation between the *chaudharis* and *muqaddams* on the one hand and the peasant on the other must have been on the basis of compounding system where the peasant agreed to pay a certain fixed amount of the produce. Thus the whole system was a mixture.[34]

A mixture of compounding and farming was found in the *iqtas*. But the *khalisa* land directly under the revenue ministry had certain other arrangements during the reign of Balban. Because of the Mongal menace, the sources of income were reduced while his expenditure had greatly increased. During the thirteenth century there is no mention of measurement and it is accepted by historians that Alauddin was the first Muslim ruler who brought into use measurement of land. Thus the two easy ways left for Balban were compounding and sharing. In compounding system the burden generally fell on cultivator and Balban definitely never liked it.[35]

Thus, the way left was sharing and, in this, there was the least chance of fraud and oppression. Balban adopted the method of sharing in the *khalisa* land. Regarding the Government share, the chroniclers are quite silent about it, though they say that Alauddin imposed the highest amount sanctioned by law, i.e. 50 per cent. Balban, in the face of pressing needs for income, therefore, must have taken a high share, though surely less than Alauddin. Thus, the whole sources of revenue of the Government of Balban comprised of sums from subjugated Hindu chiefs, the *khidmti* (presents) from the Provincial Governors and their surplus income from *iqtas*, and revenue of the *khalisa* land.[36]

The intervening period between the death of Balban and the coming of the Khiljis to the throne of Delhi was most obscure. The Sultan was too busy in his enjoyments and the whole empire was in a state of great disturbance. There seems to have been no change in the revenue system. Jalaluddin Khalji did not like to bring any change in the system of Balban and allowed the system to continue.[37]

During the reign of Alauddin, the most important change that was effected took place in the mode of assessment. He insisted on actual measurement of land. For that the whole of the centre of the kingdom came under the rule of assessment by measurement.[38]

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[34] U. N. Day, *op. cit*, p. 94
[35] R. P. Tripathi, *op. cit*, p. 261
[36] Zia ud Din Barani, p. 69
[37] U. N. Day, *op. cit*, p. 96
[38] Zia ud Din Barani, *op.cit*, pp. 287, 288.

As regards the proportion of the state or government share, Alauddin organised a big army and for its maintenance he required greater amount of revenue. He, therefore, wanted to take advantage of the Muslim law and raised the scale of taxation to the highest point. According to Muslim law the proportion of land tax could be one-half, one-third, one-fourth or one-fifth.[39] Thus, according to law, Alauddin was fully justified to impose as much as 50 per cent in the face of his increasing needs.[40]

Regarding payment, Alauddin had fixed the market prices and for the success of these regulations he required heavy resources to meet the demands. Naturally, he preferred payments in kind.[41] He passed orders that the entire revenue from the *khalisa* villages in the Doab were to be taken in kind, while from *Shahr-i-nau* and its adjoining territories, half of the government share was to be taken in kind.[42]

The officials connected with the collection of revenue were the local collectors—the *chaudharis, muqaddams* and *khots* who were Hindus, and *musarafs, karkuns* and *amils* as government employees. Alauddin brought into full use of the office of village *patwari*, and depended much upon his papers (*bahi*) for the exact amount to be taken from the local collectors.[43]

Amils, musarafs and *karkuns* all continued to be revenue officials of the *Diwan-i-Wizarat*. For the realisation of arrears of revenue, Alauddin created a branch in the *Wizarat* called *Mustakhraj*.[44] He did not completely do away with the *iqtadari* system in the areas brought under regulation by Sharaf Qai, the *iqtas* as means of remuneration was not granted. But in the rest of the empire, Alauddin had no other alternatives but to follow the old system to continue. With the death of Alauddin, his system too was thrown into oblivion.

Ghiyasuddin departed from the policy of the great Khalji monarch. He gave definite orders that the revenue should not be increased suddenly. Ghiyasuddin did not deal with the cultivators directly in the matter of revenue collection, but he assessed revenue on *iqtas* and *wilayats* and the holders of these, i.e. *iqtadars, muqtas* and *walis* were made answerable to the central government for the payment of revenue. The *muqtas* and *walis*

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[39] Nicholas P. Aghnides, *op.cit,* p. 378
[40] Zia ud Din Barani, *op.cit,* p. 287
[41] *Ibid,* p. 288
[42] *Ibid,* pp. 305, 306.
[43] *Ibid,* pp. 288, 289.
[44] Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op.cit,* p. 200.

realised the revenue from the cultivators though the agency of *muqaddams* and *khots*. Unlike Alauddin, Ghiyasuddin granted certain concessions to the *khots* and *muqaddams*. Their lands were exempted from taxation but certainly they were not allowed to realise more from the peasantry than they were to deposit in the treasury. Ghiyasuddin ordered that the demand should be made on the actual produce (*hasil*). This was definitely a very statesman-like step taken by Ghiyasuddin, because it clearly made concessions for cases of crop failures and other such unforeseen calamities.[45]

In the beginning of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's reign, the working of the revenue department was satisfactory. The fact that detailed accounts of expenditure and income were taken from distant parts of Deccan and Gujarat, and the arrears were strictly realised from the *naibs*, *walis* and *musarafs*, shows that they were under full control of the central authority and could not do whatever they liked in the matter of revenue, and had to be guided by the general policy of the Emperor.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq's policy of increasing taxation, in the Doab failed. He selected Doab for his experiment, because it was fertile and nearest to the Central Government. But he certainly did not want to create new taxes. He simply wanted to go back to the policy of Alauddin Khalji and that too only in the limited area, i.e., Doab.[46]

The distinction in this increased taxation between Doab and other parts, the inability of the country to recover from the burden of taxations introduced during Alauddin, the increase of five to ten per cent which was not a little sum, and the outbreak of famine—all these factors combined for the failure of the scheme. People rose in revolt and the feelings of the Sultan were completely embittered.[47]

But to meet the financial crisis and famine, his expenditure increased and impoverished the central treasury. Loans were forwarded to the peasantry.[48] He also created a new branch, the revenue department, the function of which was to look after, making arrangements and bringing uncultivated land under plough by means of direct state management and financial support. He named it *Diwan-i-Kohi*.[49]

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[45] Zia ud Din Barani, pp. 428, 429.
[46] R.P. Tripathi, *op.cit*, pp. 274, 275
[47] Zia ud Din Barani, *op.cit*, p.473
[48] Zia ud Din Barani, *op.cit*, p. 482
[49] Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, *op.cit*, p. 128

The taxation of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was heavy but it was certainly not higher than that of the Khalji Sultan for the simple reason that Alauddin's rate of taxation was the highest. Moreover, he abolished all non-*shariat* taxes and also exempted import duties.[50]

Firuz Shah Tughluq, on coming to the throne, at once drew all his energies to bring stability and order. The steps that he took were, to cancel all loans that people had taken during the previous reign, to make concessions over the grants by the late wazir, to increase the salaries and allowances, to re-grant the lands that had been confiscated from religious holders, and to give fresh grants to many.[51]

Firuz Shah ordered that revenue demand should be made over actual produce and concession to be made for unforeseen accidents to the crops. Firuz tried to increase his income by means of improved quality of cultivation and superior crops, by means of *haq-i-shirb* or water tax over and above *kharaj* on lands irrigated by canals—its scale being one-tenth, and from income of gardens.[52]

It was not possible to find one uniform and regular system of fiscal administration throughout the whole of the sultanate period. It varied frequently from time to time, partly due to different problems and partly due to differences in the aims, mentality and personality of the Sultans. But the Sultans had in common before them the Muslim theory of taxation and the traditions of the land in which they were destined to wield the scepter.

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[50] R.P. Tripathi, *op.cit,* p. 277

[51] U.N. Day, *op.cit,* p. 105

[52] Maulvi Wilayat Husain (ed.), *Tarikh-i-Firuz Shahi,* Shams-i-Siraj Afif, (*Bibliotheca Indica*), *BI* 119-1888-91, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, pp. 295, 296.

Liberal Trends and the Bengali Muslim Writers in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

ASHOKE KUMAR CHAKRABORTY

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Bengali Muslim writers and intellectuals reacted to various problems of community life and in their writings were reflected the orthodox, moderate and liberal trends, though it would be wrong to assume that each of these different categories of opinions formed a single cohesive and well integrated group. The progressive literary community, however, analysed the problems from their view point and suggested possible remedies within the framework of religion and endeavoured to build a public opinion leading to community upliftment. Of course, in analysing the problems or as a reaction to the awareness of something going wrong, while some of the writers pleaded for the revival of knowledge of their past glories in the political, social, cultural and intellectual fields in the belief that the backwardness of the Muslims was largely due to their ignorance of their historical and cultural traditions, somewriters and the members of the Muslim Sahitya Samaj in particular, notwithstanding their firm faith in religion opted for complete analysis and understanding of the *Quran* and the tenets of Mohammad in a scientific spirit to make Islam compatible with the progressive tendencies of the age. They stressed the need for common sense, reason and tolerance in the community's approach to life and society and advocated, in particular, a more self-enriching view of religion.

The ideology of the writers leading to mass awareness was different from elitist approach from which the common Muslims had little to gain. The urban Muslim aristocrats, better known as *Ashrafs* who had little association with the masses, could not play the role they deserved in awakening the masses to that end and the task of regeneration was, however, incomplete till the coming of a section of the newly educated Bengali Muslim literati in the second half of the nineteenth century. Moreover, the urban Muslim aristocrats remained indifferent to the Bengali language because of their insistence for maintaining social superiority. Leaders like Abdul Lateef (1828-1893) and Syed Ammer Ali (1849-1928) who served the cause of education and were the spokesmen of the Bengali Muslims regarded Urdu as the mother tongue of the urban Muslim aristocracy and Bengali as the language of the commonality of the Muslim society. They paid little attention to the social problems of the

masses and their socio-religious thought process was directed towards making the community politically important. They were eager to eliminate the anti-British sentiments of the Muslims and endeavoured to build a healthy middle class by insisting them to learn Arabic, Persian and English. Their ideas were confined within the upper and middle class Muslims.[1] On the contrary, Bengali Muslim writers had made Bengali their vehicle of expression and strengthened the Bengali Muslim society through the process of its Islamization and modernization. In modern Bengali literature, Muslim writers gave up their traditional thought to a great extent and in their writings were reflected some elements of progressive thought to make the society a dynamic one. The first Muslim writer of this genre Mir Mosarraf Hossain (1847-1912) of Kusthia, wrote the drama *Basantakumari* (1873) in Sanskritised Bengali. The subject matter of this drama was also revolutionary. It had no connection with the contemporary Muslim society, the love of young queen Revati for her stepson Narendra.

As a reaction to the awareness of something going wrong, a section of writers pleaded for the revival of knowledge of their past glories in the social, cultural and intellectual fields in the belief that the backwardness of the Muslims was largely due to their ignorance of their historical and cultural traditions. By reviving the historical and cultural traditions of the Muslims in the past, they wanted to bring about their intellectual and moral revival and thought that their past would instruct and inspire them to move with the progressive forces of the time. The writers presented the prophet of Islam as an exemplary man and argued that the prophet founded a world of religion which has a universal appeal and introduced a social order based on universal humanity, equality and brotherhood. There was an appeal on the part of a category of writers for restoring Islam to its original purity believing that the *Quranic* principles are applicable to the solution of human problems in all ages.[2] The periodical *Islam Pracharak* wrote in 1903 that the Muslims should try to revive the Islamic glory[3] and this paper in 1904 goaded the Bengali Muslims to become aware of the glorious periods of Islamic history since the study of the glorious past was considered the best means for the revival of the lost glory of the Muslims.[4] *Ahle-Hadith*, in its editorial, advised the Muslims and the English educated in particular to observe religions practices and maintain the purity of religion for the

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[1] Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906, A Quest for Identity*, Oxford, 1981, p. 13.
[2] Samsul Huda, 'Hazrat Muhomader Prativa', *Sikha*, (Bengali) 1st year, Chaitra, 1333 B.S.
[3] Ibn-i-Ma-ous, 'Amader Ki Kara Uchit', *Islam Pracharak*, (Bengali), Agrahayan-Paus, 1310 B.S.
[4] Ibn-i-Ma-ous, 'Amader Ki Kara Uchit', *Islam Pracharak*, (Bengali), Agrahayan-Paus, 1310 B.S.

development of society.[5] Syed Nawab Ali Choudhury in his *Idl-Ajha* (1900) tried to make the Muslims aware of the importance of *namaj*. According to him, regular performance of *namaj* protects men from ill ideas and generates concentration of mind, brotherhood, cleanliness, devotion, sacrifice etc.[6] Writers were critical about the impact of the role of religious preachers on society. Writing about the mullahs, *The Mussalman* wrote 'people blindly follow these mullahs whose teachings are nothing but a pack of most rotten prejudices, which have nothing to do with the real truth of the great religion of Islam'.[7] Periodical like the *Shariat* insisted the religion preaches to be dutiful to the society and to be acquainted with the principles of religious law.[8] The *Moslem Chronicle* complained that in many places the village mullahs were dissuading the rural people from sending their children to English schools. The paper, however, commented that there were the fairly well-educated maulavis who had their Islamic education at one of the central madrasahs of Calcutta, Dhaka, Hooghly or Rajshahi, or the privately managed higher madrasahs butsuch learned maulavis were rare in the countryside.[9]

The writers expressed concern over the social divisions like *Ashraf-Atrap* and the conflict between Hanafis-Mohommadis, Shia-Sunnis and other conflicting groups. The writers took special interest in resolving the disputes amongst the various conflicting religions groups and pleaded for unity as a token of advancement of the community.[10] The members of the Sahitya Samaj of Dacca were respectful to Islam and their idea was to make people more humane and rational. Abul Hussain argued that the Muslims should understand that Islam is meant for man. If it is found that any injunction of Islam stands in the way of progress of human society, then it must be repudiated with courage and a new one should take its place.[11] Periodicals like *Masik Mohommadi*, *Saogat* and *Sikha* etc. criticised the activities of semi-educated religious leadership for rendering the Muslim society 'joyless and lifeless'. The periodicals *Masik Mohommadi* and *Saogat* pleaded that painting, music and drama, which are Islamic in content, find support in the Quran and Hadith.[12] Echoing the sentiment of the papers, writers of the Muslim Sahitya Samaj did not see any harm likely to affect the society of Muslims that enjoyed lawful pleasure. It was argued that lawful songs and

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[5] Editorial, 'Namaj Roza O Adhunik Mussalman', *Ahle-Hadith*, (Bengali), Asarh, 1323 B.S.
[6] Syed Nawab Ali Chowdhury, *Idl-Ajha*, Calcutta, 1900.
[7] *The Mussalman*, December 4, 1908.
[8] 'Samaj Sevak', *Shariat*, (Bengali), Agrahayan, 1332 B.S.
[9] Rafiuddin Ahmed, *op. cit*, p. 29.
[10] *The Mussalman*, October 2 1908; A. M. Torab Ali, 'Ashraf-Atrap', *Saogat*, Sraban, 1335 B.S.
[11] Abul Hussain, 'Adesher Nigraha', *Sikha*, (Bengali), 2nd year, 1335 B S.
[12] Golam Mostafa, 'Islam O Sangeet', *Masik Mohommadi*, (Bengali), 3rd Issue, Paus, 1337 B.S.

dramas with its appealing power could prevent men from committing wrongs and thus the mental set up of the society could be changed for the better.[13] It is noticeable that notwithstanding strong prejudice, a new life amongst the Muslims was, however, visible in the field of art, music and even sports in the first half of the twentieth century. Songs of Kazi Nazrul Islam and Abbasuddin in particular became very popular among the Muslims. Compositions of Islami Bangla *Gazal* and Islamic songs like *O Mon Ramzaner Oi Rozah Sheshe Elo Khusir Eid* conciliated the anti-song propagandists to a great extent.[14] In the field of sports a new day dawned when the Mohammedan Sporting Club won the IFA shield in 1936 and won the Durand cup and Rovers cup in Bombay in 1940. The paper *Saogat* congratulated the players of the club for their tremendous success and acknowledged their contribution in awakening the latent Muslim society.[15] It could also be noticed that non-religious, economic and secular concerns gained precedence over the religious, and the most prominent expression of the new concern was an apparently non-religious approach to education. Religious education was considered necessary for moral uplift of the society[16], but writer like Wazed Ali calledupon the Muslims to send their wards to such institutions where both the religious and secular education would be given.[17] Clinging to madrasah studies through modification and adjustment but not its abandonment by switching altogether onto general English and vernacular education dominated the outlook of a section of literati.[18] The awareness of the need for secular education or enthusiasm for developing rational trend in religious outlook as reflected into early twentieth century literature showed that the writers gave stress on adjustment and accommodation with the contemporary demands and realities leading to the rational reconstruction of society.

The writers analysed the causes of the impoverished condition of the Muslim peasants from rational outlook and endeavoured to build a public opinion leading to the amelioration of their condition towards the growth of a healthy Muslim society. To find out a proper solution to the peasants

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[13] Motahar Hossain, 'Sangeet Charchay Mussalman', *Sikha*, (Bengali), Chaitra, 1333 B.S.; Abdus Salam Khan, 'Natyavinay O Mussalman Samaj', *op. cit.*

[14] Golam Mostafa, 'Amar Chintadhara', (Bengali), Aswin, 1375 B.S., p. 120.

[15] 'Mohomedan Sporting Club', *Saogat*, (Bengali), Aswin, 1348 B.S., Maruf-ul-Huq, 'Smriticharan', *Bangla Sahitye Saogat Yug*, (Bengali), Dacca, July 1985, p. 1131.

[16] Ibne-Ma-Aous, 'Amader Ki Kara Uchit', *Islam Pracharak*, (Bengali), 1310 B.S.; Hafez Motior Rahman, 'Chchatrajivan', *Ahle-Hadith*, Aswin, 1327 B.S.

[17] Mohomed Wazed Ali, 'Dharmajibane Agmata O Kusanskar', *Barshik Saogat*, (Bengali), 1334 B.S.

[18] Mamtazuddin Ahmed, 'Siksha Samasya', *Sikha*, (Bengali) Chaitra, 1333 B.S.; Khan bahadur Nasimuddin Ahmed, 'Abhibhasan', *Sikha*, (Bengali), 4th year, 1337 B. S. ; Abul Hussain, 'Bangali Mussalmaner Bhabisyat', *Jagaran*, (Bengali), 1st year, Jaistha, 1325 B.S., 'Alochana', *Masik Mohommadi*, (Bengali), 9th year, Baisakh, 1343 B. S.

problems in terms of zamindar-peasant relations, the Muslim writers reacted in different ways. While a section made an emotional appeal to the zamindars to treat the peasant sympathetically, some expressed radical ideas designed to make the *ryots* conscious of their rights and others insisted Govt. attention to this problem believing that Government would protect the *ryots* from zamindari exploitation and take initiative to improve their condition. Mohamed Ibrahim pleaded for the necessity of protecting the interest of the peasants as they were the supplier of food. He emphasised on fixing the maximum rent payable to the zamindars by the peasants and strengthening their occupancy rights.[19] Abul Hussain blamed the zamindars for their refusal to grant rights to the peasants and insisted them to improve the fertility of the soil so that the peasants could produce more crops at low cost. He even predicted that anti-zamindar campaign would be started if the zamindars did not stop illegal exaction and spending money for luxury.[20] Qazi Nazrul Islam inspired the neglected downtrodden peasants to uproot the exploiters.[21] In many cases, the writers held the zamindars responsible for the plight of peasants but believed that Government would save the *ryots* from zamindari exploitation. Mohomed Moyezuddin Hamidi in his work *Krishaker Unnati O Dukkha Pratikar* appealed to the Government to curtail the income of zamindars and invest it for the promotion of education among the children of *ryots*, establishment of hospital, maintenance of roads and arrangement of drinking water etc. The author did not denounce the zamindari system as such but held that the system which prevailed under the Mughal rule was not as oppressive as the same under British rule.[22] Mohamed Ibrahim in *Banger Krishak* suggested that government would be financially benefitted if the Government collected tax directly from the peasants through its employees.[23] Anwar Hossain pleaded that Government should advance loans to the peasants for an indefinite period and see to it that zamindars did not harass the peasants taking recourse to law.[24] Dependence on agriculture was not always encouraged by the writer like Rakibuddin Ahmed who believed that peasants' sole dependence on agriculture could not improvetheir position because on the one hand, there was not enough land to cultivate and on the other, majority of the peasants remained unemployed during the off-season.[25] He argued that the peasantry

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[19] Mohommed Ibrahim, *Banger Krishak*, (Bengali), Calcutta, 1923, pp. 3-16.
[20] Abul Hussain, 'Krishi Biplaber Suchana', *Bangiya Mussalman Sahitya Patrika*, (Bengali) Magh, 1328 B.S.
[21] Qazi Nazrul Islam, 'Rudra Mangal', *Dhumketu*, (Bengali), Sraban 26, 1329 B.S.
[22] Mohomed Moyezuddin Hamidi, *Krishaker Unnati O Dukkha Pratikar*, (Bengali), Khulna 1336 B.S.
[23] Mohomed Ibrahim, *Banger Krishak*, (Bengali), Calcutta, 1923, pp. 3-16.
[24] Anwar Hossain, 'Bartaman Artha Samasya', *Mohommadi*, (Bengali), Aswin, 1338 B.S.
[25] Rakibuddin Ahmed, 'Bangiya Mussalmaner Arthik Samasya' in *Sikha*, (Bengali), 1st year, Chaitra, 1333 B.S.

would be much more benefitted if they took recourse to both agriculture and home industry.[26] Mohamed Reazuddin Ahmed believed that hand-made goods of superior quality could find its market in Europe also.[27] Siraji strongly criticised the preachers like mullah, *maulavi, pir* etc. for their propagation that the rich were *Kafirs*, and Muslim involvement in trade or such professions which might lead them to become rich was contrary to the spirit of Islam.[28] What Siraji tended to advice the Muslims was that they should adjust themselves to the various trends of the modern age. He appealed to the *Alims* to propagate true religion and motivate the peasantry to earn their living honestly. Educated Muslims were also advised to remove from the Muslim mind the prejudices from which they had been suffering.[29] The writers offered some rational suggestions leading to the economic improvement of the poor Muslims, majority of whom were peasants. Much emphasis was put on honest trade and self employment schemes as a measure to avert poverty and suggestions were offered so as to enable the peasants to balance expenditure with income.[30]

The emancipation of women was considered by the writers as an important factor towards to socio-economic development of the community. The sufferings of women in the male dominated society has resulted from the misconceptions and misinterpretations of the *Shariah*, concomitantly with the rigidity of certain trends of Muslim thought which was used to confine women to a secluded, passive life of subordination to men.[31] The writers who took the lead in advocating reforms to improve the status of women in Bengali Muslim society refused to obey blindly the custom which was considered un-Islamic and harmful to women. The most vehement attack against the orthodox ideology came from Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, the sole exponent of women's liberation movement who raised a voice against male domination. Her mission in life was to make her society aware of the need to emancipate women from the extreme restrictions imposed by 'Purdah' which not only secluded women but also excluded them from the mainstream of life. She, however, was not against the principle of 'Purdah'. She argued 'veiling is not natural but it is ethical. By "Purdah", I mean covering the body well. We shall keep necessary and moderate Purdah'.[32] The liberal writers

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[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Md. Reazuddin Ahmed, 'Bansa O Betar Silpa', *Al-Eslam*, Kartik, 1327 B.S.
[28] Siraji, 'Eslam O Dhanabal', *Al-Eslam*, 8th Issue, Agrahayan, 1326 B.S.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Rasiuddin Ahmed, 'Krishak Jagaran', *Hedayat*, (Bengali) Paus, 1343 B.S.; Mohomed Moyezuddin Hamidi, *op. cit.*, pp.12-13.
[31] Tahmina Alam, *Banglar Samayikpatre Bangali Muslim Nari Samaj 1900-1947*, (in Bengali), Dacca, Jaisthya, 1400 B.S. p. 18.
[32] Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, 'Borqa', *Nabanur*, (Bengali), Baisakh, 1311 B.S.

played a positive role in bringing the relatively backward Muslim community into the main stream of modernization through a programme of social reform designed to emancipate women from the traditional bondage in the male dominated society. The issues like *Purdah*, polygamy, widow marriage, economic independence and more educational opportunities for girls had become the topics of concern as reflected in the Muslim press particularly in the early part of the twentieth century. In reality, women had little opportunity to exercise their rights as given in Islam. Actual practice was based on the customof the family which was the custom of the community. Marriage remained a contract, but women could derive little advantage from this as she would have to follow the custom of her family. Consent of bride was necessary during wedding ceremony but in many cases the guardians allowed no privilege to the girls to enjoy it. When a proposal was read loudly by the officiating priest, pressure was put on bride to give her consent. The mother did not hesitate to hit a reluctant girl and when she cried in pain that was taken for consent.[33] Polygamy up to a maximum limit of four wives at a time is permitted conditionally. The Muslims practised it ignoring the conditions attached to a polygamous union. A Muslim man who believed that he could indulge in any number of marriages, looked for getting rid of the unwanted wife by uttering *Talaq* three times at a single moment without any sound reason. It has no validity in ideal Islamic ethos. Begum Rokeya in 'Narir Adhikar' depicted a painful incident of divorce in a family of North Bengal. Husband uttered *Talaq* three times and fell pleasure after the incident perhaps with the idea of having another wife. Pressure was put on the divorced wife to condone *Mehar* and she was forced to go to her paternal home without having anything for her safety and security.[34] In her article 'Griha' (Home), Rokeya drew the breathtaking conclusion that 'women do not have any genuine power, women are in fact homeless. They live as they are told to or else they are turned out of the houses. The houses belong to their male guardians, not of them.[35] Judging these issues from humanitarian considerations, the liberal writers came to the conclusion that reasons responsible for the misinterpretation of *Quranic* injunctions regarding women's rights were female illiteracy and ignorance and male bigotry and vested interests in maintaining the status in society. Unless more Muslim women got educated, morally improved and economically independent, there was little possibility of their improvement of status in family and society.

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[33] Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, 'Narir Katha', *Sahachar*, (Bengali), Baisakh, 1330 B.S.
[34] Rokeya Sakhawat Hosssain, 'Narir Adhikar', *Mahe Nao*, (Bengali), 1364 B.S.
[35] Roketya Sakhawat Hossain, 'Griha', *Nabanur*, (Bengali), Aswin, 1311 B.S.

Rokeya aimed at spreading both sacred and secular education among Muslim women, as well as implementing liberal ideas without weakening their allegiance to Islam. She viewed education not only as an aid to women's familial role but as a means to women's economic independence.[36] Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School was set up in 1911 by Begum Rokeya who systematically and ceaselessly launched the campaign for Muslim women's education. She also considered it necessary to establish a society for the Muslim women and thus *Anjumane Khawatine Islam* was established in Calcutta in February 1916. Explaining the social and philanthropic purposes of the association, *the Mussalman* wrote, its objects are to promote unity, social intercourse and friendly feeling among Mohammedan ladies residing in Calcutta by providing them with a common meeting ground, to better the condition of Muslim women in general by eradicating pernicious social customs and by diffusing proper and useful knowledge and establish and conduct an industrial school for poor and needy Mohammedan women with a view to qualifying them to earn their livelihood.[37] It is noticeable that Rokeya showed her sufficient bravery by establishing an association with the purpose of mobilizing Muslim women for social reconstruction at a time when there were strong prejudices against female education.

Towards the early part of the twentieth century, this section of Muslim writers, with their liberal rational outlook, played a constructive role in bringing the relatively backward Muslim community into the mainstream of modernization through a programme of socio-religious and economic reforms. Accepted values were closely questioned and arguments in favour of adjustment to the new socio-economic and cultural order were forwarded leading to the growth of a healthy Muslim society in Bengal.

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[36] Rokeya Sakhawat Hosssain, 'Subeha Sadhak', *Moazzin*, (Bengali), Asarh-Sraban, 1337 B.S.

[37] *The Mussalman*, vol. xii, no. 28, June 4, 1918, p. 7.

RELIGION

Sufism and Society in Medieval India

AMIT DEY

Largely due to colonial intervention which was characterized by engagement of the first generation Indologists with India's Classical Past, some of the great historians in early twentieth century, India were devoted to the study of ancient Indian history. They shared one thing in common with the great medievalist Sir Jadunath Sarkar, that is their focus on political and administrative history. Later on, particularly after independence, under the impact of Marxist ideology, many intellectually gifted Indian historians became inclined to study the economic history of India. Some of their contemporaries did study social history, such as the social and political role of the Sufi saints by consulting 'unconventional sources', but unfortunately they were not regarded as the mainstream historians in India.[1] Even today there is a feeling shared by some Indian historians that religion is the source of tension and it should not be brought within the ambit of historical research. Of course there are many exceptions. Actually this view was being challenged by some historians since the late 1970s and particularly since the 1980s. There are also some leftist historians among the challengers such as Satish Chandra, S. Nurul Hasan, Hirendra Nath Mukherjee, and Amalendu De. Eminent medievalist, Satish Chandra's magnum opus is entitled *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1740,* (Aligarh, 1959). We can anticipate his future research interest in this work that is the celebration of India's composite culture. He is also known for his scholarly work on the *Jagirdari* crisis and his interest in economic and maritime history. But if we approach his multifaceted scholarly engagements chronologically, we can never miss the fact that from early 1990s he became interested in India's eclectic traditions and he studied how the Sufis and *bhaktas* contributed to the efflorescence of that tradition. We have intensively consulted such works

[1] By unconventional sources I mean works not produced by court historians, such as *malfuzat* or table talk in which great Sufi saints of medieval India were involved, *maktubat* or letters exchanged between great Sufi saints, and *tazkira* or biographies. All these sources can be regarded as important social documents. See K.A.Nizami, *On History and Historians of Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1983, Chapter 7.

for the present article.[2] Satish Chandra also edited and introduced the work of S. Nurul Hasan entitled *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India*, (New Delhi, 2005). Grand old leftist historian, the founder Chairman of the I.C.H.R. Professor R.S.Sharma wrote the preface of this volume. Nurul Hasan celebrated the role of the Sufis in strengthening India's composite culture. Historiography relating to medieval India is often characterized by a Mughal-centric approach. This Mughal-centric approach became so fashionable that Simon Digby, while carrying out his research on the Naqshbandi Sufis of Deccan, clearly mentioned that it was Aurangzib's Deccan. But the present essay includes the works of those scholars too who did not confine their focus on Mughal India, such as K.A. Nizami, Enamul Huq, Richard M. Eaton, Raziuddin Aquil, and also the present author among many others. Some experts on Sufism have studied it in the all India or to be more precise in the North Indian context, such as S.A.A. Rizvi who devoted two bulky volumes to the South Asian Sufis. The importance of studying Sufism at the regional level was appreciated by the likes of Enamul Huq, Abdul Karim, Asim Roy, Richard Eaton, Simon Digby, Carl W. Ernst, Tony K. Stewart, Z.A. Desai and the present author. Most of their works found mention in this essay. While reiterating the usefulness of regional approach, these scholars did not ignore an all India perspective. A comprehensive and meaningful description of Sufi movement at the regional level is possible only when it is related to a broader network of Islamic mysticism, the geo-cultural expanse of which may not be confined to South Asia. To avoid monotony, the present essay aims at unfolding a brief history of Sufism in South Asia as portrayed in some major works on the subject. Studying one work after another on the subject would have been a mechanical approach. We did not want to bother the general readers with such an approach. However, to cater to the requirements of trained scholars we have provided the names of leading scholars and their celebrated works in the endnotes wherever and whenever necessary. Inquisitive readers might carry forward their search by checking the page numbers of relevant scholarly works on Islam in general and Sufism in particular as provided in the endnotes.

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[2] Satish Chandra's major works during this phase are *Mughal Religious Policies, the Rajputs and the Deccan,* Delhi, 1993; *Historiography, Religion and State in Medieval India,* Delhi, 1996; *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals: Delhi Sultanat 1206-1526,* Delhi, 1997; *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals: MUGHAL EMPIRE (1526-1748),* Delhi, 1999 For Hirendra Nath Mukherjee's view on the subject please see his pamphlet entitled *From Amir Khusrau To Abul Kalam Azad: The Commingling of Cultures in India*, published by The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 1999.

The tenth century is very significant in the history of Islam. This period witnessed the rise of Turks on the ruins of the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as striking changes in the realm of ideas and beliefs. The domination of the *Mutazila* or rationalist school of Islam was terminated by the emergence of orthodox schools that put emphasis on the Quran and Hadith. The period was also marked by the rise to prominence of the Sufi mystics and *silsilahs* (orders).[3]

The Mutazilites or rationalists received the patronage of the Abbasid Caliphs and used their power to persecute their rivals. They also tried to systematize theology by applying reason (*aql*). The orthodox elements, however, condemned them as religious sceptics and persecuted them. It is not surprising that famous Sufi saint Mansur Hallaj was also executed in the tenth century AD for his unorthodox views. The collapse of rationalist school strengthened the hands of the 'traditionalists' which culminated in the advent of four schools of Islamic law. Of these, the Hanafi school was the most liberal. The eastern Turks who later migrated to India were the followers of this school; this partly explains why the Muslims in the subcontinent, unlike their counterparts elsewhere, were often comparatively flexible in matters of faith. The decline of the Mutazilites also contributed to the ascendancy of the Sufi mystics.[4]

The Sufis emerged in Islam at a very early stage. Most of them were highly spiritual persons who were disgusted by the vulgar demonstration of wealth and degeneration of morals in the aftermath of Islam's politico-military triumph. Some of the Sufi pioneers such as Hasan Basri and his disciple, the woman Sufi Rabia (d. eighth century AD) reiterated the importance of prayer, continual fasting and unconditional love of God.[5] The term 'Sufi' originated from the Persian word *suf* meaning coarse wool. The Islamic mystics of Central and West Asia used to wear a long garment (*khirqa*) manufactured by *suf* which caused constant pinching. Such discomfort kept them awake throughout the night and reminded them about their spiritual duties such as *zikr* (reciting the name of God) and *fiqr* (remembering God).[6] Wearing of a patched garment of wool (*suf*) also indicated that the Sufis tried to follow the legacy of the prophets, and Christian apostles and ascetics who believed in simple living and high thinking. Simple and austere lifestyle made the Sufis very much acceptable to the poor Indian masses. At the same

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[3] Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 235.

[4] *Ibid*, p. 236.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Carl W. Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, New Delhi, 1997.Amit Dey, 'Sufism in India' in Chirantan Sarkar (ed.) *Abakshay* (a bilingual journal), issue no 7, Chakdaha, 2004, pp. 18-21.

time their sophistication in terms of cultivating literature or theology enhanced their status among the aristocracy in general and Muslim aristocracy in particular. The Sufi concept of *fana* or spiritual merger of the devoted with Allah antagonized the orthodox Ulama. Mansur Hallaj's proclamation of the doctrine Anal-Haq (I am Truth/God) was actually a reflection of the Sufi belief that unification with Allah was the highest stage of enlightenment. Sufi movement got its martyr when Mansur sacrificed his life for his beliefs. The tragic death of Mansur earned the Sufis the reputation of being men who were pure hearted, sincere and indifferent to worldly gains.

This was how an essentially quietist movement based on love, devotion and contemplation gradually became inclined towards ecstatic love with the potentiality to challenge the existing social norms, religious beliefs and practices.[7] Between the tenth and twelfth centuries various Sufi orders or *silsilahs* emerged. During the same period *khanqahs* (Sufi hospices) were also being established by the renowned Sufis. Apparently, the practices and organization of the *khanqahs* resembled the Buddhist and Christian monastic systems. The ambulatory Nath Panthi Yogis, with their *markaz* (headquarters) at Peshawar, familiarised the Sufis with the practices of *hath-yoga*. The translation of *Amritkund,* the Sanskrit book on hath-yoga, into both Arabic and Persian confirms the interaction between the yogis and Sufis which strengthened the composite nature of Indian culture in the medieval period.[8] Like the wandering Yogis, the wandering Islamic mystics, popularly known as *Qalandars* had to encounter various religio-cultural groups in course of their travelling, and became liberal and unorthodox. However, they were denounced as *be-shara* (those who do not act in conformity with the *Sharia*) Sufis by the orthodox elements. Many present-day *Qawwali* singers show their respect to these *Qalandars* and thus reflect their appreciation for India's multiculturalism. There are also Sufis who function in tune with the *Sharia* (canon law of Islam) and are known as *ba-shara*. This is one of the reasons why Sufi movement should be studied as a heterogeneous movement.

Sanai (d.1131), Rumi (d.1273) and many other Persian poets spread the Sufi message of mystic union and love far and wide. Imbued with the spirit of humanity and tolerance, their verses created ripples in the Indian subcontinent. It is not su rprising that the eclectic Mughal Emperor Akbar was a great admirer of Rumi.[9]

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[7] Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 237.

[8] *Ibid,* Amalendu De, *Theological Discourses in Indian History*, Presidential Address, 2003-04, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

[9] S. Nurul Hasan, *Religion, State and Society in Medieval India*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 72.

Some of the Sufis were fond of musical gatherings (*sama*) in which a state of ecstasy was created. This created consternation among the orthodox Ulama who argued that music is not permitted in Islam.[10] The Chishti Sufis were amongst earliest Islamic mystic migrants to south Asia. This Sufi *silsilah* tried to appropriate various aspects of Indian cultural traditions, such as music, and became extremely popular in the subcontinent. They supported *sama*.

In the thirteenth century, Delhi emerged as one of the major centres (*markaz*) of the Chishtis. This was possible largely due to the activities of the illustrious Chishti saint Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, who left his birthplace in Transoxiana and arrived in Delhi in the early 1220s. He was warmly welcomed by Sultan Iltutmish.[11] It is useful to note that following the Mongol devastations of Central and West Asia, Delhi emerged as an inviting place before many eminent scholars, religious divines and fugitive princes. After coming to Delhi, Kaki met the challenge both of the Ulama and the Suhrawardis. The former wanted to oust him from Delhi and condemned Kaki as a heretic on the ground that the mystic was fond of *sama*. This criticism had no impact upon Sultan Iltutmish who wanted to use Sufi influence to counter the Ulama. Once Kaki was about to leave Delhi for Ajmer, which is also an important centre of the Chishtis. But a huge crowd accompanied him outside the city for miles and he had to settle in Delhi. The magnitude of popularity the Chishti saints enjoyed in South Asia is amazing. However, the Suhrawardi silsilah, because of their orthodox approach, could not enjoy such popularity among the Delhiites.[12] Why some of the Sultans of Delhi, such as Iltutmish, favoured charismatic Sufis like Kaki, should be studied in its broader historical perspective. The Turko-Afghan Sultans were trying to build up their empires in the Indian subcontinent where Muslim population was overwhelmed by the non-Muslim population. Particularly during the embryonic stage of empire building, strict observance of the *Sharia* (canon law of Islam) would have antagonized the majority population. Establishment of the *Sharia* rule in tune with the advice provided by the Ulama, was not possible in the Indian environment. Many sultans who excelled in statecraft realised that an empire derives its strength from heterogeneity. Now many Sufi saints epitomized India's composite culture in the sense that they had Hindu, Sikh and Muslim followers. Many Chishti and Qadiri Sufis believed in the policy of *sulh-i-kul* or 'peace with all'. Later on, Mughal Emperor Akbar could emerge as a great empire builder

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[10] Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 237.

[11] *Ibid*, p. 239. For details about Kaki, Chishtis and *sama*, see Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, vol. i, New Delhi, 1986 (reprint).

[12] Chandra, *Medieval India*, pp. 239-40.

largely because of his capacity to translate this concept into practice. Offering patronage to some Sufis implied strengthening of the symbols of multiculturalism. Thus many Sultans were able to win the confidence and loyalty of the subject population who represented diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The two most prominent Sufi orders in South Asia during the Sultanate period were the Chishti and the Suhrawardi. The Chishtis flourished in Delhi and in the surrounding areas, including Rajasthan, parts of Punjab, and modern UP, Bengal, Bihar, Malwa, Gujarat and later on the Deccan also experienced the waves of Sufi movement. The Suhrawardis were influential mainly in Punjab and Sindh. Territories were divided between different Pirs (leading Sufis of different orders) in such a way as the Sufis of various orders could maintain a cordial relationship amongst themselves.[13] Indeed! The modern religious sects have much to learn from these predecessors.

Muinuddin Chishti, the doyen of the Chishti movement in South Asia moved to Ajmer around AD 1206 when Turkish hegemony was firmly established there and a sizeable Muslim population of Turkish ghazis and prisoners of war, who had to embrace Islam under duress, came into being. The saint selected Ajmer as his centre because like Chisht (in Central Asia), it was a small town and away from the epicentre of political activity, Delhi. The saint believed that the environment in a small town was favourable for spiritual experimentation.[14] Similarly, great saint Hamiduddin settled down at Nagaur – another small town in Rajasthan. Khwaja Muinuddin was married, but led the life of an ascetic. His principal object was to enable the Muslim piety to lead a life of devotion to Allah. He was not interested in conversions, since he believed faith was an individual concern.[15] Interestingly, this same spirit was reflected in the activities of rulers such as Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq and Emperor Akbar who used to venerate this saint.

It should be mentioned that many Sufi saints actually became famous after their demise. Muinuddin was no exception. His image as a saintly man became larger after his death in AD 1235 when Muhammad bin Tughluq visited his grave. Canonization of a Sufi is marked by the erection of structures like dome or mosque on the tomb of the deceased Sufi. For example, a mosque was built near his tomb by Mahmud Khalji of Malwa during the 15th century. However, Muinuddin's stature as a saint reached

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[13] *Ibid*, p. 238.

[14] *Ibid*, p. 239.

[15] *Ibid.*

its apex under Akbar who nurtured deep respect for him. Akbar could grasp the political importance of Ajmer. This far-sighted ruler also identified Muinuddin as the symbol of India's composite culture who was respected by all irrespective of religious beliefs. Akbar knew that in the volatile situation of Rajasthan such positive elements required strengthening.[16] Muinuddin advised his followers to 'develop river-like generosity, sun-like affection and earth-like hospitality.'[17] River, sun and earth are sacred among the Hindus. In this way the Sufi saints reflected their appropriating nature while addressing the common people in a language they understood. Such an approach increased the popularity of Chishti saints in medieval South Asia.

It brings us to another great Chishti saint Baba Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakkar, the most famous disciple of Kaki. Farid lived at Hansi in modern Haryana, then moved to Ajodhan which was on the Sutlej on the main route connecting Multan and Lahore.[18] He put emphasis on poverty emulating the Prophet Muhammad who used to say 'I take pride in my poverty.' It is useful to note that many Sufi saints used the image of the Prophet as a source of authority. This was a natural legitimizing process as they had to encounter the challenges of Islamic orthodoxy.[19]

Farid also put stress on renunciation of worldly goods and attachments, control of the senses by fasting and other austerities, humbleness and service to others.[20] He was a saint of broad outlook and some of the verses, ascribed to him were included in the Guru Granth Sahib of Nanak.[21] Nizamuddin Auliya (d. AD 1325), the chief successor of Baba Farid, was the most illustrious Chishti saint of Delhi where he worked for fifty years during a period of great political turmoil characterised by the collapse of Balban's dynasty and the ascendancy of Alauddin Khalji, volatility following the demise of Alauddin Khalji and the rise of the Tughluqs. He survived those frequent changes of dynasties and rulers because of the Chishti philosophy of keeping politics at bay and not associating with the rulers and nobles.[22]

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Amalendu De, *Theological Discourses*, p. 9.

[18] Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 239-40. For information on individual Sufi saints of South Asia see N. Hanif, *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Sufis, South Asia*, New Delhi, 2000.

[19] Arthur Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*, South Carolina, 1998. Amit Dey, *The Image of the Prophet in Bengali Muslim Piety: 1850-1947*, Kolkata, 2005.

[20] Chandra, *Medieval India*, p. 240.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*

The Chishti saints laid emphasis on a life of simplicity, poverty, humility and selfless devotion to God. Many of them were so obsessed with the notion of poverty that they lived in mud covered thatched houses, wore patched clothes and encouraged prolonged fasting. Like the yogis, they considered that control of senses was necessary for spiritual uplift. Muinuddin Chishti interpreted the highest form of devotion to Allah in terms of redressing the misery of the miserable, helping the helpless and feeding the unfed. Nizamuddin Auliya regarded altruistic services as more important than obligatory prayers.[23]

At a time when the Turks turned a blind eye to the Islamic concept of brotherhood and looked down upon the ordinary people, the Sufi attitude of non-discrimination helped to reduce social tensions. The principal concern of the Sufis was the amelioration of the condition of Muslims. However, their care and concern did not exclude the Hindus. The Chishti saints freely interacted with Hindu and Jain yogis and discussed with them various matters, particularly yogic exercises. Once being greatly impressed by the devotion of a group of Hindus, Nizamuddin Auliya remarked before his friend poet Amir Khusrau: 'Every community has its own path and faith, and its own way of worship.'[24]

Bahauddin Zakariya, the founder of the Suhrawardi *silsilah* in India, did not believe in starvation or self-mortification. Unlike the Chishtis, the Suhrawardis accepted royal grants and believed that money was necessary to help the poor. They also put emphasis on the external forms of religion, i.e. *Namaz* (prayer), *Roza* (fasting), *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) or *Zakat* (charity). Though Bahauddin prescribed restricted visits to *Sama* (Sufi music), the orthodox Ulama became hostile towards him on that issue. When the Chishtis tried to distance themselves from politics, Bahauddin believed that visits to royal courts enabled the saint to help the poor through royal support. On the other hand such visits enabled the Sultans and their associates to receive the spiritual blessings of saints.[25] The Suhrawardi order had the credit to be the first Sufi order that was introduced to Bengal by Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (d. AD 1225), a saint of India-wide fame. However, the Persian and Urdu works provide no information about his activities in Bengal. Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawi (d. AD 1642) had devoted a few pages to Shaikh Jalaluddin in his famous work *Akhbar ul Akhyar* (in Persian), but is silent about the Shaikh's birth place (*watan-e-paidaish*), and as regards Bengal, he only mentions that Shaikh Jalaluddin has started

[23] *Ibid*, p. 241.
[24] *Ibid*, pp. 241-2.
[25] *Ibid*, pp. 243-4.

to move towards Bengal.[26] According to *Akhbar ul Akhyar*, Jalaluddin Tabrizi was initially a disciple of Shaikh Abu Said Tabrizi, and then, after the latter's death, of Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi.[27] Now the silence of the Persian sources in connection with Shaikh Jalaluddin's activities in Bengal have led some scholars to depend on *Shek Subhodaya*, a later work in dog Sanskrit wrongly attributed to Halayudh Misra, a court poet of the last Sena king Lakshmana Sena. According to this book, the birth place of Jalaluddin Tabrizi was Etawa (in modern UP, India); the name of his father was Kafur and he had received education with the help of Ramadan Khan, a merchant. This book also mentions that Shaikh Jalaluddin arrived in Bengal before Bakhtyar Khalji's conquest of Nadia and foretold the impending Turkish invasion of Lakshmana Sena's kingdom. But according to modern scholars the stories in *Shek Subhodaya* are fictitious. The saint was born at Tabriz in Persia and not at Etawah.[28] Secondly, he could not have come to Bengal before Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest. According to Fawaid ul-Fuad (in Persian) the saint came to Delhi when Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish was reigning.[29] Now Sultan Iltutmish ascended the throne in AD 1210. So the saint could not have come to Delhi before AD 1210, not to speak of his arrival in Bengal before that date (Lakshmana Sena died in AD 1206).[30] There is a set of buildings in Pandua (Malda) which go by the name of Bari Dargah or the shrine of Jalaluddin Tabrizi.[31] These buildings are: (a) one Jami Mosque, (b) two *Chillakhanas* or places of worship, (c) one *Tanur Khanah* (kitchen), (d) one *Bhandar Khanah* (store house), (e) Haji Ibrahim's tomb, and (f) *Salami Darwazah* (entrance gate). The original shrine was built by Sultan Alauddin Ali Shah (AH 742-43/ AD 1341-42) at the order of the saint in dream.[32] Probably the original mosque

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[26] Abdul Haqq Dihlawi, *Akhbar ul Akhyar*, (in Persian), p. 47.

[27] *Ibid*, p. 47. Another Persian text entitled *Fawaid ul Fuad* (p. 180) confirms that Shaikh Jalaluddin was the disciple of Shaikh Shihabuddin. Noted medievalist Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, in his *Tarikh Mashaikh i Chisht* (in Urdu, Vol. I, Delhi, 1980, p. 179) has provided a genealogy of the Suhrawardi order.

[28] Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal*, Dacca, 1959, p. 95, Abdul Karim, *Corpus of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, Chittagong, 1992, p. 348, Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A History of Sufism in Bengal*, Dhaka, 1975, pp. 146, 160-8, *Shek Subhodaya*, edited by Sukumar Sen, Calcutta, 1927, cited by Enamul Haq, in his *History of Sufism*, p. 160 *ff*

[29] Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Fawaid ul-Fuad*, Lucknow, 1885, p. 236.

[30] Abdul Karim, *Social History*, p. 94.

[31] Abid Ali Khan, *Memoirs of Gaur And Pandua*, edited by H.E.Stapleton, Calcutta, 1931, pp. 97-106.

[32] Ghulam Hussain Salim, *Riyaz us Salatin*, Bibliotheca Indica, AD 1898 , pp. 94-5, cited by A Karim, *Social History of the Muslims*, p 94.

was also built by him, which was repaired in AH 1075/AD 1664 by Shah Nimatullah.[33] The Bhandar Khanah was erected by one Chand Khan in AH 1084/AD 1673.[34] The inscription attached to the Lakshmana Sena Dalan shows that Muhammad Ali of Burji had repaired the *Astanah* (place of meditation) of Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi in the year AH 1134/AD 1722.[35] The inscription in Tanur Khanah records that it was built by one Sadullah in AH 1093/AD 1682.[36] The endowment to the shrine of the saint is known as *Bais Hazari*, its income having been twenty-two thousand *tankas*.[37]

From the developments mentioned above we can deduce that building activities around the tomb or shrine of a saint used to commence decades and sometimes more than a couple of centuries after his demise. Similar thing happened with Muinuddin Chishti's shrine. As a result, these saints sometimes became more famous after their deaths. Secondly, the sultans and nobles often contested among each other in showing their respect to the deceased saint through their involvements in building activities. It is useful to note that mainly the important, influential and popular shrines received the patronage of the sultans and nobles in medieval India. It was a common legitimizing process through which the rulers and aristocrats tried to enhance their images among the nobility and the subject population. Thirdly, the existence of mosque at the site was in conformity with the Suhrawardi preference for the external rituals of Islam. The discovery of Tanur Khanah (kitchen) at the site confirms the fact that the Suhrawardis were keen to sustain the Sufi ritual called *langar*. The latter became a symbol of Islamic egalitarianism as the nobles and the commoners received the same food served at the Sufi centres. Interestingly, this practice is also common among the Sikhs.[38] Another great Suhrawardi Sufi of Bengal was Shah Jalal Mujarrad-i-Yamani (d. AD 1346). This reputed saint was also a great warrior, and was largely responsible for the propagation of Islam in the whole of Eastern Bengal and Western part of Assam.[39]

The Chishtis also consolidated their position in Bengal. Shaikh Akhi Siraj (d. AD 1357) was one of the most famous saints of this order who flourished in Bengal. Because of his sound knowledge, his spiritual guide Nizamuddin

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[33] Khan, *Memoirs*, p. 100.

[34] For inscription see *Memoirs*, p. 102

[35] *Ibid*, p. 103.

[36] *Ibid*, p. 104.

[37] A Karim, *Corpus*, p. 348.

[38] Sunita Puri, *Advent of Sikh Religion; A Socio-Political Perspective*, New Delhi, 1993, Chapter 4.

[39] Amit Dey, *Sufism in India*, Kolkata, 1996, pp. 22-5.

Awliya used to call him *Aina-i-Hindustan* (Mirror of India). Another illustrious Chishti saint of Bengal was Nur Qutb Alam (d. AD 1415). His tomb is in the town of Pandua (Malda). The Naqshbandi and the Qadiri Sufis flourished in Bengal after the collapse of the Delhi Sultanate. The Naqshbandis were orthodox, and expressed their hostility to the mystical folk songs of Bengal.[40]

Bijapur in the Deccan flourished as an important centre of the Chishtis from AD 1300 to AD 1700. Apart from the Chishtis, the Qadiris and the Shattaris exercised their control in Bijapur. Another important Sufi centre in the Deccan was Gulbarga which was graced by the presence of Bandanawaz Gisudaraz (d. AD 1422), the famous Chishti saint, who migrated there from Delhi. Bidar also emerged as an important *markaz* (centre) of the Qadiri *silsilah*, many of whom were Arab migrants. In course of time many successors of Gisudaraz became landed gentry or *inamdar* Sufis who received land as *inam* (grant) from the kingdom of Bijapur. In return for this patronage the Sufis had to pray for the perpetuity of the Kingdom. However, after Aurangzeb's campaign in that region, many of these Sufis switched over their allegiance to the Mughal Emperor who did not terminate the practice of offering *inam* to secure the loyalty of local Sufis. The mutually beneficial relationship between the Kingdom of Bijapur and the Sufi saints confirmed the fact that the latter did not always function in conformity with the Chishti concept of keeping politics at bay.[41]

Apart from the Chishtis, the Naqshbandis also had their base in the Deccan. However, they were not as popular as the Chishtis. Aurangabad became an important centre of the Naqshbandis. The most illustrious Naqshbandi Sufis of Aurangabad were Baba Palangposh (d. AD 1699) and Baba Musafir (d. AD 1715). Baba Palangposh was born in a place near Bukhara. He permanently came to Deccan in 1683 and is lying buried in Aurangabad. Baba Shah Musafir was also of Central Asian origin. His father hailed from the Kubrawiyya Sufi order and his mother belonged to a family of Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet).[42] Particularly the Naqshbandi Sufis used genealogy as a source of authority.[43] Thus, in the Weberian sense, Baba Musafir could successfully combine hereditary charisma with acquired charisma.

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[40] *Ibid*, pp. 26-8.

[41] Richard M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700; Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (First published in 1978), New Delhi, 1996.

[42] Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Awrangzeb's Deccan*, New Delhi, 2001.

[43] Buehler, *Heirs of the Prophet*, pp. 82-97.

If the focus is shifted towards western India it would be interesting to note that the commercial city of Ahmadabad can also be described as the city of *dargahs,* because more than a dozen major *dargahs* are located here. Among the important *dargahs* of the city are those of Piranpir, Shah Abu Turab Shirazi, Shah Abdul Wahhab, the Senior and Junior Airdrus and Pir Muhammad Shah.[44] We shall discuss the *dargah* of Pir Muhammad Shah for its representative value. He came to Ahmadabad from Bijapur in the eighteenth century. This renowned Sufi hailed from a Qadiri background and was known for his profound scholarship and literary bent of mind. He was groomed under the paternal care of his uncle Sayyid Abdur Rahaman, who not only exposed him to formal education in traditional religious lore, but also initiated him into the basic tenets of the Qadiri *silsilah* from quite a young age. He visited Mecca and Medina and engrossed himself in the study of various religious sciences such as Quranic exegesis, Hadith (tradition), and *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) under the guidance of illustrious teachers.[45] It can be deduced from the above description that in those days many erudite Muslims regarded scriptural and mystical knowledge as complimentary to each other. This, to a large extent, buttressed their endeavours to accommodate diverse cultures and different interpretations. Logically this broadened the mental horizons of many medieval saints and contributed to the sustenance of India's composite culture. Pir Muhammad Shah died in May, AD 1750 and was buried within the walled city, near the haveli of Salahuddin Khan, where his disciples from the town of Kadi (District Mehsana) constructed his tomb, a mosque and a garden close by. The saint's mausoleum is a large domed building resembling a degenerate Mughal style.[46] The glory of the Mughal Empire was waning fast during that period, particularly after the Persian and Afghan invasions spearheaded by Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali respectively. Signs of decay could be visible in the external, material and masculine world. The internal spiritual world was still untouched by the ravages of wars and political intrigues that characterized the declining phase of the empire.[47] Apparently the vacuum in the external world was being compensated by the developments in the spiritual world. But still the Mughal Empire and the symbols which represented it were regarded as legitimizers. Hence the Mughal

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[44] Z.A.Desai, 'The Major Dargahs of Ahmadabad' in Christian W. Troll edited, *Muslim Shrines in India*, New Delhi, 2004 (Second edition), pp. 76-97.

[45] *Ibid*

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] A comprehensive picture of factionalism and intrigues that accentuated the decline of the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century has been provided in Satish Chandra's book entitled *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court.*

architectural pattern could be emulated while building a mausoleum for a deceased Sufi saint such as Pir Muhammad Shah. This process and the magnitude of its success determined the spiritual position of a particular shrine or tomb or mausoleum in the hierarchy of similar buildings.

Gujarat was also famous in the Mughal era as a revenue-rich province largely due to its long tradition of maritime trade. Seen from that angle, it would be relevant to study the material implications of Sufi establishments of Ahmadabad. Pir Muhammad Shah has a considerable following among the affluent trading community of Sunni Bohra Muslims domiciled in Ahmadabad and other important towns such as Surat, Patan, and Baroda. Through the munificent offerings of these wealthy businessmen *murids* (disciples), the Sufi establishment has, over the years, amassed huge landed property in and around the *dargah* (shrine). The value of these lands has risen considerably and the entire estate is maintained by a registered Board of Trustees known as the Dargah Pir Muhammad Shah Committee. Its members and those of its sub-committees are elected from among the members of the community.[48]

The saint's *Urs* (death anniversary) is celebrated on a grand scale when hundreds of devotees from the city and distant places throng the mausoleum. In its spacious premises boarding and lodging facilities are offered to the pilgrims. On the first day the usual sandalwood ceremony is held. On the second day, the Quran is recited by a group of thirty trained people.[49] This event challenges the stereotyped notion that Sufis do not function in conformity with the *Sharia* (canon law of Islam). Indeed! At times the Sufis can play a significant role in popularising the basic tenets of Islam among the common people. During *Urs,* a special dish of pulao, called in popular parlance Pir Muhammad Shahi pulao, is served among the participants. It is useful to note that in a *dargah* complex more than one Sufi saint can be venerated. For example, the death anniversaries of Pir Muhammad Shah's uncle and first preceptor Sayyid Abdurrahman, of Shah Wajihuddin Alawi, and of the founder of the Qadiri order Sayyid Abdulqadir Jilani of Baghdad (d. AD 1166), are also celebrated with the fatiha ceremonies and the distribution of sweets and eatables. In the month of Ramadan, a special dish, *halim*, is prepared and served to fasting pilgrims who come to stay for *tarawih* (additional night prayers during Ramadan) prayers in the mosque.[50]

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[48] Desai's article 'Dargahs of Ahamadabad' in Troll (ed.) *Muslim Shrines*, p 92.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid*, p. 93. *Fatiha* recitations after death : Some Muslims hold gatherings on the third, seventh, tenth, fifteenth or fortieth day after the death of a person, in which passages of the Quran are recited and meals served. However, these practices are not compulsory (*farz*) and were not done by the Prophet. They are simply expressions of respect towards the memory of the dead person,

The Dargah Trust is also involved in welfare and social service activities such as organising training classes for girls and women, promoting education by offering scholarships, books, and similar facilities. There is a spacious building attached to the dargah. In one wing of that building is a large library open to the public. There are some 3000 printed books in that library available in different languages such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Gujarati and English. Availability of books in so many languages is significant. It implies that many Sufi centres by reflecting their broad and liberal outlook contribute to the nourishing of India's cultural pluralism. By making knowledge available in both oriental and occidental languages this particular Sufi centre serves as a bridge between the east and the west. When the peace of our planet is being threatened by religious fundamentalism, sectarianism and cultural chauvinism, the UNESCO would do a great job by giving publicity to such Sufi establishments in a meaningful manner. Besides, the library has a fine collection of about 2000 valuable Persian, Arabic and Urdu manuscripts covering different branches of Islamic learning and literature.[51]

Pir Muhammad Shah was a poet by his own right, who composed verses with 'Aqdas' and 'Shahid' as his poetic names. He has, to his credit, a number of tracts in Persian and Gujari or Dakani verse. These priceless manuscripts are also preserved in the library. A number of his *murids* (disciples), both male and female, have composed verses in Persian and Urdu in his praise, as also mourning his death. Collections of these poems are also available in the library. These are extremely useful materials to assess Gujarat's contribution to Urdu language and literature.[52]

The Piranpir's dargah in the Jamalpur quarter of the city was built in the seventeenth century over the grave of Shah Abdulkhaliq, whose origin was traced from the illustrious saint of Baghdad, Shaikh Abdulqadir Jilani

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and condolence towards the bereaved left behind, and are really matters of culture and not of Islam. It is quite incorrect to imagine that the soul of the departed one will benefit from these gatherings and practices, or that the soul would suffer in some way or be punished if these things were not done. We can always cherish the memory of our deceased, and pray for them, but the intensity or number of our prayers is not the basis on which Allah will judge the soul. If a person believes he or she is *more* compassionate or just than Allah and, therefore, can beg, bribe or influence Him to change His will towards any particular soul, this is really a form of *shirk* (polytheism). It is certainly misguiding. There is nothing special that happens to the soul of the deceased on these days. Vide, Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, *A Basic Dictionary of Islam*, New Delhi, 1998 (reprint), 2000, p. 71. Muslim ambivalence towards some ritual dynamics associated with Sufism is reflected in the above paragraph.

[51] Muhammad Zuber Qureshi,'The Library of Hazrat Pir Muhammad Shah at Ahmadabad,' in C. W. Troll (ed.), *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*,Vol. 2, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 282-300. Cited in Z. A. Desai's article mentioned above.

[52] Desai, 'Dargahs of Ahmadabad,' p. 93.

(d.1166). Linking genealogy to the famous saints of Middle East is regarded as a form of legitimizer by the Sufi *silsilahs* (orders) of South Asia. So far as its architectural pattern is concerned, the usual tomb style of perforated stone-screen walls has been adopted. Many visitors throng the dargah on certain weekdays. It attracts a larger number on the *Urs* anniversary of the buried saint, as well as of the founder of the *silsilah* (the Qadiri order), which falls on 11 *Jumada* I.[53] It is useful to remember that veneration of illustrious Sufi saints who never visited India is not unique among the pious Muslims of Gujarat. It is common in Bengali Muslim piety as well. Availability of their *tazkiras* (biographies), particularly the *tazkira* of Abdulqadir Jilani in the Bengali language confirms this fact. Majority of such biographies appeared during a period when the external, masculine and material world was being dominated by colonial presence. In the era of socio-economic and political challenges, Indian Muslim piety often used the world of the Sufis as the bastion of Islam from which they could derive peace, solace and inspiration. Like the Prophet Muhammad, the Sufi pirs also emerged as their friends and their role models. However, it is useful to remember that all the pirs (Sufi saints having many disciples) did not enjoy similar respect in the spiritual hierarchy. Some particular saints, such as Abdulqadir Jilani, were regarded as the universal symbols of Islam who can be surpassed only by the Prophet Muhammad. These universal symbols of Islam got priority over the local symbols of Islam (such as local pirs) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when resurgent and reformist Islam was moving from strength to strength. This was to facilitate the process of community solidarity among the Indian Muslims.[54]

The *rauza* (tomb, mausoleum, shrine)[55] of Shaikh-al-Aidrus is situated in the Jhaveriwada locality and is a fine mausoleum of stone of the domed and perforated stone-screen-wall variety. Shaikh-al-Aidrus hailed from a renowned saintly family of Hadramout in southern Arabia. The saint migrated to Gujarat in the fifteenth century. The tomb attributed to his son Shaikh Abdulqadir al-Aidrus is not very far from his own tomb. Junior Aidrus is better known for his prolificity as a writer and poet of Arabic. He authored many books including *Al-Nur al-Safir li Ahl al-Qarn al-Ashir* which is regarded as an important source for the cultural and literary history of sixteenth century Ahmadabad.[56] Junior Aidrus's case is unique from the linguistic point of view. Generally, the Sufi writers and poets in South Asia

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapters 2 and 3. How the advent of print in Muslim society posed a serious threat to the institution of Sufism has been dealt with in chapter 2 of my book.

[55] Makhdoom Sabri, *Concise Twentieth Century Dictionary; Urdu into English*, Delhi, 2001, p. 409.

[56] Desai, 'Dargahs of Ahmadabad' p. 94.

manifested their creative faculties in the Persian language. There were also occasions when many Sufi poets and writers expressed themselves in the vernacular languages which contributed to the growth of those local languages.[57] But Junior Aidrus used Arabic as his medium of expression. Unlike Persian, Arabic was not the official language in medieval India. Nor was it a spoken language in India. But original Quran and Hadith are available in Arabic. Considering this religious dimension of the language, the saint perhaps tried to legitimize his place in the spiritual hierarchy by cultivating this language. When a section of the orthodox Ulama made it their habit to scrutinise different aspects of Sufism, such legitimizing drive was a natural response from Sufi quarters.

The dargah of Shah Abu Turab, a scion of the Salami Sayyid family of Shiraz, rose to prominence at the time of Emperor Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in 1573.[58] It has been indicated elsewhere that like any other pragmatic ruler, Akbar understood the importance of maintaining a cordial relationship with the leading sufi establishments which were popular among both the Muslims and Hindus in order to enhance the stature of the Mughal Empire. Such legitimization was particularly necessary in a province like Gujarat which was being exposed to Mughal military and administrative mechanisms. Akbar trusted Shah Abu Turab who carried out negotiations with the nobility in Gujarat on behalf of the Mughal Emperor. In 1578, he was appointed as the *amir-i-hajj* (one who leads the *hajj* pilgrims) by Akbar. After performing *hajj*, Shah Abu Turab returned to Fatehpur Sikri with the *qadam-i-rasul* (the foot print of the Prophet), which was reverently received by Akbar.[59] The eclectic Emperor Akbar knew how to resolve the underlying tension between the veneration of a local *pir* (who, at times, may be interested in international networking as manifested in the case of Shah Turab who led the *hajj* pilgrims.) and the emphasis on the universal symbols of Islam such as the *qadam-i-rasul* or the *hajj*. Thus, *qadam-i-rasul* and *hajj* could

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[57] Amit Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, chapter 1. For a list of Persian texts on Sufism see Amit Dey, *Sufism*, chapters 1 and 2.

[58] Desai, 'Dargahs of Ahmadabad', p. 94.

[59] *Ibid.* The veneration of *qadam-i-rasul* was not unique in Gujarat. This happened in medieval Bengal as well in the Gaur-Pandua (Malda district) region. I carried out fieldwork in Bangladesh in the year 1996. I was escorted by two Dhaka based poets, Asim Saha and Kajalendu De along the river Sitalakshma until we reached a place where *qadam-i-rasul* was being venerated. The place was in the vicinity of Narayangunj, near Dhaka. Initially the caretaker of that shrine was sceptical about the purpose of our visit. We understood that under the spell of aggressive Islamization, practices such as the veneration of *qadam-i-rasul* were being condemned as *shirk* (polytheism) and *bida* (innovation). But when the caretaker was convinced that we were not journalists sponsored by Islamic orthodoxy, he even allowed us to take photographs of the shrine and the ritual dynamics related to the veneration of *qadam-i-rasul.*

be used as source of authority both by the Sufis and the sultans in medieval South Asia. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that Shah Turab's dargah, which is situated in the old Asawal locality, to the south of the Calico Mills, seems to have been venerated mainly on account of the *qadam-i-rasul*, which was there until the middle of the eighteenth century. It is stated that during the Maratha insurgence, it was removed into the walled city. It has been argued, that later the descendants of Shah Abu Turab, shifted it to Cambey, to which place they belonged.[60]

Majority of the Sufi saints in South Asia accepted the concept of *wahadat al-wujud* or 'Unity of Being'. They believe that 'the world is so closely related to Him that everything is He.'[61] (Hama Ust or 'Everything is He'). In other words God is reflected in everything. It implies that God is also reflected in a Hindu, so a Hindu should not be denounced as a kafir (infidel). Such an inclusive approach contributed to the strengthening of India's composite culture and further enhanced the popularity of many Sufi saints. It should be mentioned that there were also Sufis who did not share this liberal approach and embarked on a policy of exclusion. They believed in the exclusion of Hindus from important administrative and military positions and expected the Muslim rulers to administer the state in strict conformity with the sharia (canon law of Islam). That is why it is often difficult to draw a demarcating line between a section of Sufis and the orthodox Ulama.

The Sufis played a significant role in the growth and efflorescence of vernacular literature such as Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Deccani and other regional languages. The classical language, Persian, continued to receive patronage from the court as the language of power and administration. The Sufis massively contributed to the spread of poetry and music. The Chishtis used song and dance as techniques of concentration and for creating spiritual ecstasy.[62]

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[60] *Ibid.* Late maritime historian, Ashin Dasgupta has shown that trade and commercial activities flourished during *hajj* which led to the growth of *Hajj* Market in the Arab world. Like Emperor Akbar, Sufi Abu Turab, who led the *hajj* pilgrims, must have been aware of this market. It would be interesting to study Sufism in this broader context of trade and commercial activities. In this context we can mention that in the ancient period, the Buddhist monasteries often flourished along the established trade routes. Professor Ashin Dasgupta discussed *hajj* market in his Bengali book entitled *Upakule Juganta: Sholo Satak, Portuguese Abhighat O Asiar Banijyer Punarbinyas*, Kolkata, 1999, pp. 18-21.

[61] Neeru Misra (ed.), *Sufis and Sufism: Some Reflections,* New Delhi, 2004; See Iqbal Sabir's article 'Impact of Ibn' Arabi's Mystical thought...

[62] Dr Raziuddin Aquil's lecture delivered at the Department of History, University of Calcutta on 27 March 2006.

Some of the early Bengali poets had been Sufi-poets such as Sayid Sultan, Shah Barid Khan and Alaol. Bengali folk music, such as the *baul* and *jari* songs also owed much to Sufism.[63] Sufis also appropriated ritual dynamics prevalent in a region or locality.[64] For example mention can be made about votive offerings at dargah (burial place of a Muslim saint), burning incense and tying bricks at holy places with the expectation of securing fertility among women.[65] In this way Sufism significantly contributed to the formation of regional identities in different parts of South Asia.

If Sufis learnt from non-Muslim traditions, the local, Indic traditions (local, foreign, Indic are sensitive categories which must be handled with care) were also influenced by the principles of Islam as represented by the Sufis. The dynamics of Sufi Islam was resonated in the teachings of Kabir and Nanak as they criticised idolatry and meaningless rituals, and laid emphasis on monotheism and egalitarianism. In the case of Sikhism, important sections of the Guru Granth Saheb are borrowed from Sufi poetry.[66]

The proximity of the Sufis to non-Muslim traditions helped the former to play an important role in conversion and Islamization, even if many of them may not be working with a concrete agenda of this sort. Yet the presence of charismatic Sufis was the principal factor in the conversion of large sections of South Asian population into Islam. Sufi institutions, khanqahs (Sufi dwelling) and dargahs, emerged as centres where Muslims and non-Muslims assembled for worship and sought blessings and benediction. The process of conversion commenced with devotion towards a particular Sufi, leading to the emergence of syncretic sects, symbolizing only half conversion. Eventually, there emerged communities of Muslims who professed Islam formally, but continued with their practice of local customs and traditions, which invited the criticism of puritanical, reformist Islam. Reformist movements gathered momentum from eighteenth-nineteenth centuries onwards.[67]

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[63] Dey, *Image of the Prophet*, Chapter 4.

[64] Dey, *Sufism*, Chapter 1.

[65] *Ibid.* Chapters 1 and 2.

[66] Dr Aquil's lecture mentioned above.

[67] *Ibid*, Raziuddin Aquil, *Sufism, Culture and Politics: Afghans and Islam in Medieval North India*. New Delhi, 2007.

Jaunpur as a Seat of Bhakti Tradition and Hindi Love Lores

SYED EJAZ HUSSAIN

Decline of the Tughluq rule under the Delhi Sultanate led to the emergence of some independent provincial sultanates at the close of the fourteenth century. The Bahmani Sultanate came into existence in AD 1347 under Ala-ud Din Bahman; the Faruqi dynasty in Khandesh was founded in AD 1382; Malwa Sultanate assumed an independent position from AD 1392 under Dilawar Khan Ghori and the Sultanate of Jaunpur was established in AD 1394 by Malik Sarwar, the *Khwaja-sara* or eunuch of Firuz Shah Tughluq. Among these provincial Sultanates, Jaunpur occupied a very significant position. During the period of a century of their rule six rulers occupied the throne of Jaunpur. Malik Sarwar (1394-99) and his adopted son Mubarak Shah (1399-1402) ruled for short periods. But Ibrahim Shah (1402-1440), Mahmud Shah (1440-1457) and Husain Shah (1458-1479) ruled for longer periods. Muhammad Shah (1457-58) also ruled for a brief spell. The reign of Ibrahim, Mahmud and Husain covers a period of nearly eighty years during which Jaunpur rose to prominence in northern India. Its rulers had to fight not only with the neighbouring tiny kingdoms like Kalpi, but they also led military campaigns to Delhi, Malwa, Tirhut, Bengal and even to Orissa. In spite of all these wars and military engagements the Sharqi rulers found time for peaceful pursuits. They encouraged education, patronized artists and musicians, scholars and Sufis, and erected magnificent buildings, some of which are still extant, while some are in ruins. Jaunpur also emerged as one of the most renowned seats of Muslim learning and culture in the East during the Sultanate as well as during the Mughal period. Several educational centres and madrasahs were founded at several places in the kingdom of Jaunpur. Scholars and Sufis of different places from India and abroad like Persia and Syria visited Jaunpur. Even after the decline of the Sharqi kingdom Jaunpur remained significant as a seat of learning and culture. Sher Shah, the founder of the Suri dynasty was sent by his father Hasan Khan Sur for the purpose of education from Sasaram in Bihar to Jaunpur. Islamic religious education particularly the Quran, Hadith, *tafsir*, *fiqh*, *usul-i fiqh*, *nahv*, *mantiq* and several other subjects were taught at the centres of learning. Bibi Raji, the first and favourite queen of Ibrahim Sharqi, established some madrasahs for the female education. The name and fame of the scholars of Jaunpur reached far and wide, and even abroad. When

Humayun migrated to Persia in exile the then Safavid ruler Shah Abbas enquired from him about the state of the scholars and Sufis of Jaunpur. Humayun was much impressed to know the fame of the Jaunpur scholars in Persia. When he regained the power in India after his victory at the second battle of Panipat, he attempted to restore the glory of Jaunpur that was devastated by Sikandar Lodi. Humayun's successors continued this policy. Shah Jahan called Jaunpur as *Shiraz-i Hind*.

Jaunpur was not only a centre of Islamic learning and Sufism, but it also rose to prominence for Bhakti tradition and Hindi love lores. Kabir (1440-1518), the leading vocalist of Bhaktism, belonged to Benares which was a part of the Jaunpur kingdom. There is a locality in Jaunpur town that is known as Kabir Patti. Perhaps the followers of Kabir lived there. Kabir's period largely fell during the golden days of the Sharqi rule. Kabir's preaching was for individual salvation and a kind of egalitarian set-up where all had the equal right to breathe in fresh air by shunning orthodox practices and attitudes. He said:

'Brahman gadha jagat ka, tirath lada jaye
Yajman kahai main puni kiya, woh mihnat ka khaye'

(The Brahmin is the world's ass, who is burdened with pilgrimage
The client says 'I did acts of goodness', The Brahmin has his labour's wage.)[1]

Kabir further said:

Unche kul kya janmiyan, je karni unch na hoi
Soban kalas sure bharya, sadhu nindya soi

(If deeds aren't high, it matters not if one is born in high household
A righteous man condemns whole soul a liquor filled pot made of gold.)[2]

Jaunpur Sultans are never said to have disturbed Kabir in his preaching. The orthodox society Kabir lived in, tolerably listened to His *dohas* which used the people's dialect of mixed Bhojpuri. Kabir also never attacked the rulers in any of his couplets.

Vidyapati, the contemporary great Mithila poet did not belong to Jaunpur. Still his famous work *Kirti Lata* was devoted to Ibrahim Sharqi, whom the poet went to meet from Mithila to Jaunpur. He exhorted the Sharqi king to help with his arms and army the Mithila king Kirti Singh enabling him to suppress the local chief Arsalan Khan and regain his lost kingdom. Ibrahim

[1] Mohan Singh Karki, *Kabir: Selected couplets from the Sakhi in Transversion*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas, 2001, pp. 46-7.
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 38-9.

Shrqi's support to Mithila king against the local Turkish chief display the overall attitude of Sharqi rulers towards his non-Muslim subjects and their quest for justice and benevolence as has been eulogised by Vidyapati in his poem. Though Vidyapati has also spoken of the unkind behavior of the Turkish soldiers, who were always involved in getting war spoils, source of their chief income. But he has nowhere said anything against the policy of Ibrahim Sharqi towards his non-Muslim subjects.

It is notable that Jaunpur was known for certain Sufi saints who had written narrative poems on love in Hindi. Mulla Daud, Shaikh Kutban, Malik Muhammad Jaisi, Mir Manjhan and some other poets composed *premakhyan* or love-lore in Awadhi and Bhojpuri mixed dialect. Through these long human tales of love which were similar to the Persian *masnavi*, the great *darveshes* and Sufis expressed their eternal devotion to the Divine Creator. An effect of these narratives in the popular imagination might have been the transformation of the *darvesh* into a symbol of mundane human love.[3] Mulla Daud composed *Chandayan* in AD 1379, Shaikh Kutban produced *Mrigavat* in 1503, Malik Muhammad Jaisi wrote *Padmavat* in 1540 and Shaikh Mir Syed Manjhan Rajgiri composed *Madhumalati* in 1545.

Chandayan is the earliest extant love-ballad in the Sufi tradition. It narrates the story of a wandering mendicant who captivated the hearts of people on the streets by singing a popular love-ballad called *Chandravali* which was perhaps an earlier love poem in the Indian tradition of love narratives. Mulla Daud, a prominent Chishti Sufi of Dalmau, now in Rai Bareilly, was the disciple of Shaikh Zain-ud Din, the nephew, successor and chief attendant of Nasir-ud Din Chiragh Dehlavi (d. 1356), who, in turn, was the disciple of Hazrat Nizam-ud Din Awlia of Delhi (d. 1325). The story of *Chandayan* revolves around the emotional love of Chanda and Lorik. What is interesting is that both Chanda and Lorik were married. Maina was Lorik's wife while Bavan was Chanda's lawfully wedded husband. Both Chanda and Lorik eloped to a different region called Hardi Patan and later occasion came when the two women, Chanda and Maina, apart from exchanging taunting and acerbic remarks, had physical fights. The story ends with the death of Chanda due to snake-bite. In this entire love-lores, Almighty God has been addressed as Gosain, Srijanhar, Alakh Niranjan and Vidhata. Chanda has been treated as *Parmatma* (Supreme soul) while Lorik as Atma (soul) in metaphysical terminology, and both Chanda and Lorik have deep faith in the virtue of compassion and mercy of the Ultimate Truth. When Chanda

[3] Banarsi Das, *Ardhakathanaka*, (ed. & tran. Mukund Lath), New Delhi, Rupa & Co, 2005, p. 150.

succumbs to snakebite and dies, Lorik weeps bitterly and reaches the point when one has to practice *sabr* and *tawakkul*, and finally he submits to the will of God. On this occasion Lorik says:

Daya Gosain Srijanhara,
tohi chhadi kas karwun pukara
(O my Creator, have mercy, my Lord
Except You, who (elśe) should I call upon?)

Abdul Qadir Badayuni in *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh* has written that *Chandayan* composed by Maulana Daud had the power to entrance the Sufis and the common folk alike. *Chandayan* became so popular that Abdul Quddus Gangohi (1453-1518), a well known contemporary Sufi began to write a Persian version of the love-lore, but Sultan Bahlol's attack on Jaunpur and the turmoil created, destroyed not only the plan but the pages also which he had transcribed.[4]

It may be noted here that when *Chandayan* was composed in AD 1379. the ruler of Delhi was Sultan Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351-88), in whose praise Mulla Daud says:

Sahi Peroj dhili bado Raja
Chhat paat ao te pai chhaja
(King Firuz is the great ruler of Delhi
The (royal) parasol and the throne are befitting to him alone.)[5]

The composition of *Chandayan* and its folk story has nothing to do with the Sharqi Sultanate which was set-up about fifteen years later. But it is notable that the composition of such a folk romance in a regional dialect by a renowned Sufi must have encouraged harmonious elements and helped control the social tension after the establishment of the Sultanate rule. It was this atmosphere in which the Sharqi rule was set-up. The Sharqi rulers encouraged and patronized this culture. As a result of this a number of other Sufi folk-lores came into existence.

The next Sufi folk literature was *Mrigavati*, composed again in Awadhi dialect in 1503 by the Sufi saint Shaikh Kutban in Jaunpur. Kutban was a renowned Sufi and he was the disciple of Shaikh Burhanuddin of Kalpi. He was a court poet of Husain Shah Sharqi. *Gulzar-i Abrar* informs us that he later joined the Shattari order of Sufism. *Mrigavati* opens with a panegyric

[4] Naseema A. Hines, *Maulana Daud's Chandayan: A Critical Study*, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2009, pp. 69, 84, 122
[5] *Ibid*, pp. 40, 66.

to Husain Shah, the last Sharqi ruler who was then living in exile at Kahalgaon under the shelter of Bengal's Sultan Husain Shah. In praise of Husain Shah of Jaunpur Shaikh Kutban says:

Husain Shah ah bado Raja *chat singhasan unh mein chhaja*

pandit aur budhwant siyana *potha bânch arath sab jana*

dharma dughistil wanh kanh chhaja *ham sir chhanh jiul jug raja*

dân deyi bahu ginat na awa *Bali au Karan na sarbari pawa*

rai jahañ lahi gandhrap ahai *seva karhin bâri sab chahai*

chatur sujân bhakha sab jana, ais na dekhewu koi

sabha sunhu sab kan dai, phuni ra bakhanon soi

aginit thât ginat na awa *khardam kheh gagan sab chhawa*

apunhi sanjhar âge kar pawa *pâchhe prai so dhuri phakawa*

meghdambar chhaya bahu tâne *seva karhin rao ao râne*

turiya tâp as kheh udani *âthi ambar bhaw puhumi jinh jâni*

gaj gavan jag sâton hoi *Basuki Indra duhau budhi khoi*

jiyay dân jo châhe, din das seva karo sao bâr

jâkanh bhaonh hoi chakh mailo, so ra hoi jari chhâr

dând Indra Basuki seon leiyi *âur dând Lankesar deiyi*

inh baan koi guni siyana *devat-hin âysu inh kar mana*

jaso hans ke bât ik kahihain *dukh dârid ao pâp na rahihain*

prithi ma ais bhayau na koi *sar to deun suneu jo koi*

pâp punn lewu jarmahi kâwu *dharma karat kachhu kahi jawu*

adharam kiyawu na jag manh kâwu, dharma karhin bahu bhânt

nisi bâsar bibi tais-hin chit-hin, budhi paras-hin to sânt

padhhin Puran kathin jo hoi *arath kah-hin samujhawat soi*

ek ek bol ka das das bhawa *pandit-hin achkar bakti na âwa*

âur bahut unh keri badâi *hamre kahe kahan kahi jâi*

munh munh jeebh sahas jo hoi *tor badaai karai jo koi*

jab lag asthir rahe sumeru *har bhârja bahe jabh neru*

saban sunhu chit layi kar, kahaun bât haun eik

âu badho Husain Sah ke, âh jagat kae tek[6]

Shah Husain is the great king, canopy and throne befit him. Intelligent, erudite and man of wisdom He knows the scriptures and their meaning
Great as Yudhishtir, just and pious shade for us, long live O king!
No bounds knows his bounty Bali and Karan can't keep parity
All the kings till the Gandharva's land seek an occasion to serve and tend
Cleaver, wise and linguist, like him there is none
O people! Lend me thy ears, I repeat the same again

Countless are his armies when they move dust cover the sky
Those who lead only are safe those who lag behind taste the dust
All the chief and nobles serve him holding canopy of silk over his head
Hooves of his cavalry raise dust so high that it floats like fog in the sky
His elephants' march frightens man even Indra and Vasuki lose courage
Ten days service, hundred times a day only can save one's life
Upon whom he frowns, turns to ashes

From Indra and Vasuki he realises tax even Lankeshwar pays him the tribute
None can match his intellect even God seek his advice to act
To whom he talks with smiling sway his sorrow and poverty vapours away
None like him has been on the earth I can counsel if one listens to

[6] Dr. Parameshwarilal Gupta, 'Husain Shah Sharqi ke Antim Din' (in Hindi), *Itihas Anushilan*, Bhopal, Ank. 1, Jayestha 2024 v.s. (June 1967), pp. 65-72.

One is not born with sin or virtue but some virtuous deeds be always done
He never lead an unrighteous path in the world, always did good acts
He thinks constantly night and day, his mind suggests doing right and truing
He reads Puranas with expertise and explains their meaning too
Multiple meanings of his single word astounds and makes dumb even the wisest
Many more attributes he has I am unable to express all
Thousand tongues if one has only then he could sing his praise
So long the mountain Sumeru stands so long water flows in the river Ganges

Everyone listen to me with attention, the only thing I say
Long live Husain Shah, pillar of the world.[7]

Kutban's praise of Husain Shah is, no doubt, full of hyperbolic overtones and exaggerations. But in spite of all these it is also a fact that Husain Shah was certainly a great ruler and a learned man. He was fond of art and music. Husain Shah's military power was matchless and Vidyapati also expressed similar praise for him.

The plot of *Mrigavati* resembles the Indian fairy tales. A prince falls in love with an *apsara*, a celestial maiden, who comes down from her heavenly abode on certain days in order to bathe in a lonely pond. The prince makes her captive through a ruse. *Apsara* also plays a trick and escapes. Now the prince wanders everywhere in search of the fairy and finally wins her after a long and arduous journey. During his frantic search which was allegorically divine, he comes across with other fairies. *Mrigavati* closes with a happy ending and instruction for remaining continuously engaged in the remembrance of God.

The illustration of paintings found in *Mrigavati* (Figs 1 & 2) tells that it is not only a folk romance but it is a product of the artistic and literary taste

[7] Sanjay Garg (ed and tr. into English), 'Last Days of Hussain Shah Sharqi' in *Parmeshwari Lal Gupta's Coins and History of Medieval India*, (com. and ed. Sanjay Garg), (Delhi: Rahul Publishing House, 1997), pp 91-100 The present author has made some minor changes in the English transcription of the poem with kind permission of Dr Sanjay Garg.

of the society of the middle Gangetic belt of India and particularly the Jaunpur region under the Sharqi rule. Bed with mattress covered with decorative bed-sheet and pillow, articles and utensils for ready use kept below the bed, the majestic dress theme of the hero and heroine and frontal pond with flowers, ducks and fishes creating an appropriate romantic scene with multi-colour combination all are Indian in theme, spirit and presentation (Fig. 1). However, the Persian *kulahdar* cap worn by the hero who is obviously a Hindu suggests that it was used both by the Muslims and Hindus as symbol of prestige and status for an aristocratic family. Fig. 2, on the other hand suggests that the high Hindu ladies also used to ride the horses and the well decorated Palanquin carrying them was borne by four persons while their maids went along having been carried in simple *dola* made of some long cloth by two persons only.

Malik Muhammad Jayasi (1477-1542) composed *Padmavat* in 1540. He was a Chishti Sufi and lived in Jais, presesntly in Rai Bareli district of Uttar Pardesh. Jayasi was the disciple of Shaikh Muhi-ud Din, who in turn, was the disciple of Shaikh Burhan-ud Din of Kalpi. The story of *Padmavat* has a political tinge as it is based on the siege and capture of Chittor by Ala-ud Din Khalji in AD 1290. Ratansen, the ruler of Chittor falls in love with Padmavati, the princess of Simhala after learning about her beauty from the parrot he had purchased. In order to find Padmavati, he leaves his kingdom, turns into a yogi and after great pains and troubles ultimately he meets Padmavati and marries her; and finally reached Chittor with his beloved. On the other hand, Nagamati, Ratansen's first wife, suffers from pangs of separation or *viraha* in absence of her husband. When Ala-ud Din Khalji comes to know of Padmavati's beauty from a disgruntled courtier of Ratansen, he planned to attack Chittor. Meanwhile, Ratansen is killed in another battle. When Ala-ud Din invades Chittor and the fort of Chittor falls to his hands, both Nagamati and Padmavati became *sati* on their husband's funeral pyre. Ala-ud Din won Chittor but not Padmavati. *Padmavat* thus ends in tragedy. Yash Gulati who wrote *Sufi Kavita ki Pahchan*, has attempted to explain the Sufi message ingrained in the story of *Padmavat* and remarked, 'Chittore stands for the body, the king symbolizes of the mind, Simhala signifies the heart, and the parrot represents the teacher who shows the king the path to Padmini, the ultimate intelligence.'[8] In fact, the story of two human lovers is represented in Sufi-lore in an allegoric fashion in order to depict the love of the soul for the Ultimate Truth and its final union with Him losing his

[8] Yash Gulati, *Sufi Kavita ki Pahchan*, (New Delhi: Pravin Prakashan, 79), p.142; Naseema A. Hines, *loc.cit*, pp. 22, 139-40.

own identity. The theme of losing his own self or identity is called *fana* in Sufi philosophy.

Who? Who is more beautiful, I or Padmavati?'

Queen Nagamati asks to her parrot, and it gives a displeasing reply.

Courtesy: Library of Congress [http://www.loc.gov/rr/asia]

Padmavat, contrary to the imaginary plot of *Chandayan* and *Mrigavat*, is primarily based on historical facts of the siege of Chittor in AD 1290 by Ala-ud Din Khalji. Some suitable modifications to fit the purpose of narrative do not spoil the historicism of the main plot of the tale. Ratansen, the then king of Mewar has been mentioned as the hero; instead Bhimsen who was on the throne when the episode happened while the journey to Ceylon to win Padmavati is also simple imagination of the poet. Nagamati who was Ratansen's first wife, suffers the pain of separation or *viraha* as happened in the case Maina who was Lorik's first wife. Malik Muhammad Jayasi has also praised Sher Shah who was the then Sultan of Delhi.

Madhumalati, another contemporary love poem was composed by Shaikh Mir Syed Manjhan Rajgiri who was a Sufi of the *Shattari* order. The story of *Madhumalati* is also a dressed-up fantasy like that of *Mrigavati*. The allegorical elements are, however, more explicit and clear in it than in *Mrigavati*. For instance, here we find the names of the cities, like *Maharasanagara* or 'the City of Ecstasy' where the beloved resided. The prince in search of his beloved passes through another city which is called *Cittabisraunnagara* or 'the City of Forgetfulness.'[9] The story of *Madhumalati* develops along the lines similar to *Mrigavati*. Prince Manohar is carried in his sleep by the nymphs to the bed chamber of Madhumalati. Upon waking up, both fall in love with each other. But nymphs became regretful for what they had done in fantasy. So they took back the prince to his palace. The prince now suffers from the pangs of separation or *viyoga* and left the palace and became a yogi in quest of his beloved. After a great deal of pain and sufferings he finds Madhumalati and marries her, and both returned to the palace.[10] In this way begins the allegory of the soul's quest for the divine truth and beauty.[11] Manjhan has praised king Salim or Jahangir in his *Madhumalati* which was composed during his reign.

[9] Abdul Qadir Badayuni in *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Vol. I, (Bibliotheca Indica series), p. 333; Banarsi Das, *op.cit*, pp. 188-9; Muhammad Salauddin, *Sharqi Rajya Jaunpur ka Rajnaitik ewam Sanskritik Itihas*, (Gorakhpur: Neelkamal Prakashan, 2004), pp. 106-07.

[10] Naseema A. Hines, *loc.cit*, p. 140.

[11] *Ibid*, pp. 61, 83; Aditya Bahl and Simon Weightman (ed. & tr.), *Madhumalati: An Indian Sufi Romance*, Oxford, 2000, introduction.

It is notable that *Padmavat* and *Madhumalati* were composed after the end of the Sharqi rule but the transformation of political power did not affect the production of such secular theme of folk-love versified narratives. Besides, both Hindu and Muslim literary class nurtured the desire of possession of such manuscripts some of which were well illustrated. On the other hand, the common people used to sing and narrate such folk-love verses in public and they became a source of entertainment for them. Banarsi Das, the famous trader of Jaunpur, knew these poems, which were universally admired. For months during his lean days in Agra, he used to recite these poems to a group of his friends who found them so interesting as to gather around him every evening for the recital.

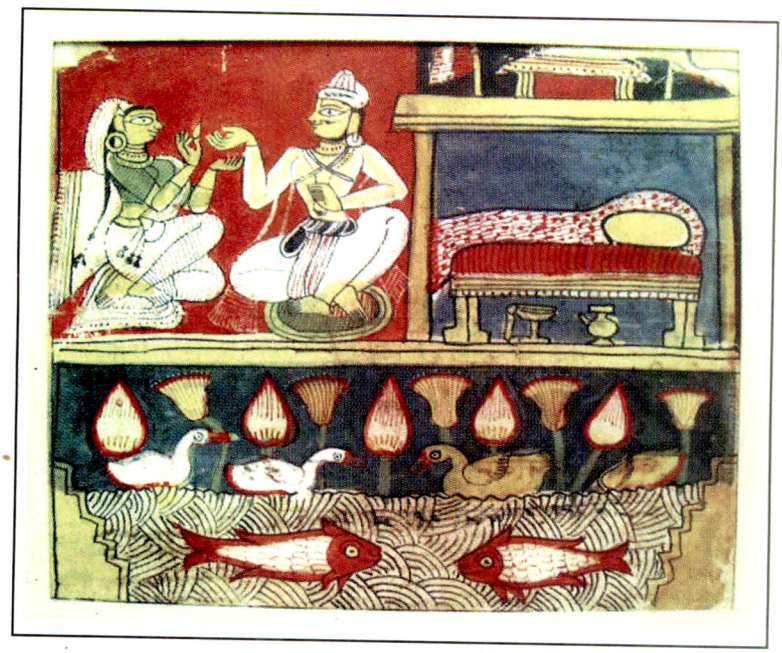

Fig. 1. A Scene from *Mrigavati*
Bharat Kala Bhavan Collection, Varanasi

Fig. 2. Another Scene from *Mrigavati*
Bharat Kala Bhavan Collection, Varanasi

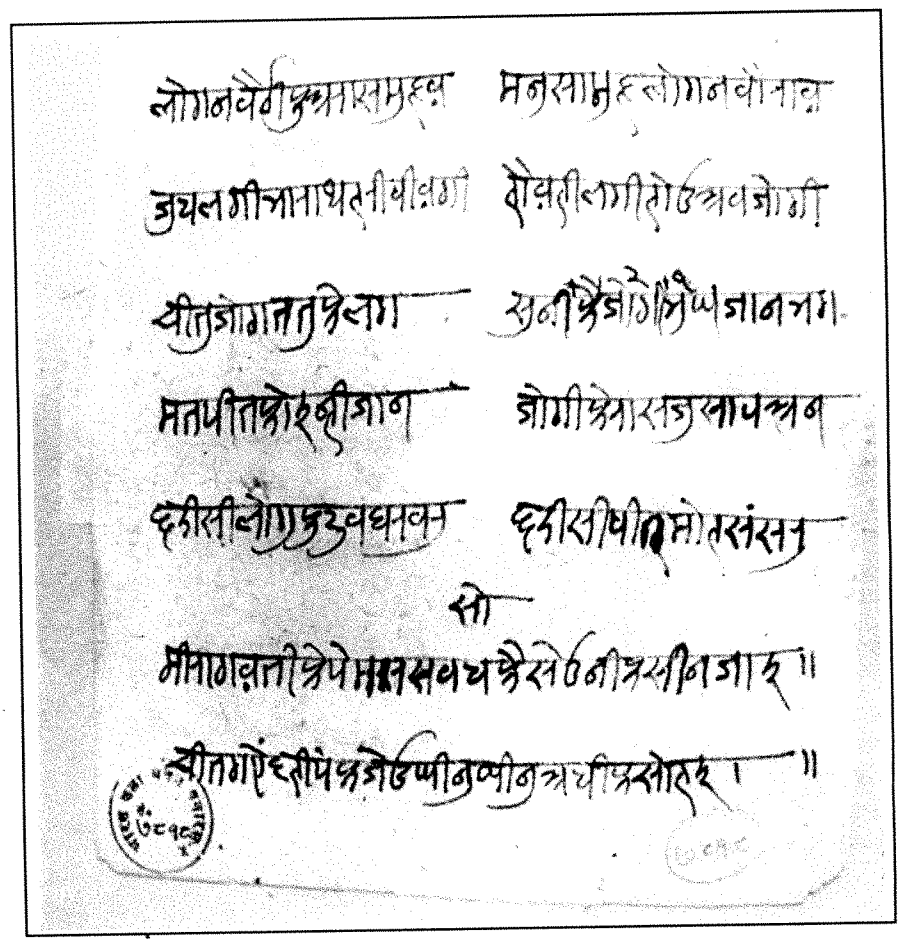

Fig. 3. A Page from *Mrigavati*
Bharat Kala Bhavan Collection, Varanasi

Fig. 4. A Page from *Padmavat*